Boston College
Lynch School of Education and Human Development

Department of
Educational Leadership & Higher Education
Program in Higher Education

COLLEGE BEHIND BARS: EXPLORING JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

Dissertation
by

PATRICK FILIPE CONWAY

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

May 2022

College Behind Bars: Exploring Justifications for the Involvement of Higher Education in Prison

By

Patrick Filipe Conway

Dr. Andrés Castro Samayoa, Dissertation Chair

ABSTRACT

The involvement of colleges and universities in the provision of higher education opportunities in prison has reemerged after a long pause following the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill, which effectively ended the majority of postsecondary prison education programs. The 2016 Second Chance Pell Program has been instrumental in the development and expansion of higher education opportunities in prison. Support for justice reform measures has led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons, taking effect as early as 2023, with funding for the initiative included in the most recent congressional stimulus bill.

Both Second Chance Pell and one of the most progressive state-level prison education policies, New York's Right Priorities initiative, rely almost exclusively on positioning higher education in prison as a tool for meeting the market needs of the state: reduced recidivism equating to taxpayer savings. This dissertation extends prior research examining the pitfalls of justifications overly reliant on narratives of recidivism. Using a three-article approach, it explores justifications capable of articulating the full moral vigor necessary to sustain long-term commitments to such policies and programs, ones that prioritize humanized responses to incarceration.

The first article amplifies justifications articulated by those who have been the beneficiaries of such educational opportunities, investigating formerly incarcerated student perspectives on the value, meaning, and purpose of such programs. The second article, by focusing on policy developments within the state of New York, examines how the rhetoric of recidivism emerges in media coverage of both federal and state level support for college-level prison education. And, finally, the third article considers the pedagogical implications of adjusting the lens through which programs are defended, exploring the use of andragogical teaching methods—those associated with the tenets of adult education—in the context of prison classrooms. Taken together, each study contributes to literatures examining justifications for higher education in prison, and develops deeper understandings of the need for the provision of such opportunities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An important theme emerging within the first article of this dissertation relates to how educational opportunities often have a way of creating communities of mutual respect and mentorship. I have been lucky to experience that myself here at Boston College, as evidenced by the number of people who have contributed to this project in ways both large and small.

I am deeply appreciative of the 21 participants, all former students within the Boston University Prison Education Program, who agreed to take part in the study conducted within the first article of this project. This dissertation simply would not exist if not for their willingness to be both reflective and forthright about their own experiences of incarceration and involvement within higher education in prison. I would also like to thank Dr. Jenifer Drew and Dr. Mary Ellen Mastrorilli, both of whom not only helped me recruit participants but also continue to serve as mentors for me within prison education.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Andrés Castro Samayoa. His encouragement, advice, and feedback at nearly every step along the path toward completing this dissertation will remain one of the aspects of my time in the doctoral program I remember most vividly. I am similarly grateful for the involvement of the two other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Karen Arnold and Dr. Dennis Shirley. Both not only were encouraging and charitable with their feedback, but also with their time. Dr. Arnold's course on college student development provided the impetus for the third article in this dissertation. She provided valuable support on that paper—as well on many other aspects of this dissertation—from beginning to end. Thank you as well to Dr.

Carlo Rotella, who has served as a mentor for me at Boston College since I was a master's student in the English Department.

I am thankful for the relationships I have developed with graduate student colleagues in the Lynch School. A big thank you for all of the camaraderie and peer-mentorship to those in my cohort: Chris Jacobsen, Venus Israni, Kyle Shachmut, Kate Cavell, and Adam Krueckeberg (our "adopted" cohort member). A special thank you as well to Kathy Rohn—collaborating on the "Appalachian Trail" project has been one of the most memorable, instructive, and *fun* experiences for me while in the program.

Thank you to my parents, Jeremiah and Nazaré Conway. I more or less have learned everything I know about writing from my father (so any grammatical errors in this dissertation should be viewed through that lens!), and my mother's work with the refugee and asylee communities in Portland, Maine encouraged me from a young age to seek out opportunities to both help and learn from those who often remain marginalized. During some of the more arduous moments of working on this project, she was always quick to offer encouragement: "*Pouco a pouco, enche a galinha o papo*." The impact on my life of my brother Brendan remains profound. His passing (not too long before my enrollment in this program) was a seismic event for me. I hope to always honor who he was by how I aim to treat others.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wife Josepha and our daughter Sofia. Five years ago, prior to starting this program, I could not have imagined my life would be so full. I owe much of those feelings of fullness to both of you.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

It is undeniably an era of progress for the development and expansion of higher education opportunities in prison. The involvement of colleges and universities in the provision of prison education has finally reemerged after a long period of dormancy following the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill, which effectively ended the majority of programs by banning the eligibility of Pell Grants to incarcerated students (Gould & SpearIt, 2014; Ubah, 2004). Announced at the tail end of the Obama administration, the 2016 Second Chance Pell Pilot Program has provided significant federal support for higher education programs in prison, enabling both new programs to take root and already-established programs to further develop. The federal initiative has been so well received that the full return of access to Pell Grants for incarcerated students is set to take effect as early as 2023, with funding provided for the proposal as part of the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, better known as the COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill (Burke, 2021; US Department of Education, 2021).

It is not just the federal government and individual institutions, however, that are renewing commitments to higher education in prison. Certain states have begun taking a more active role as well. Prison education—and, more broadly, criminal justice reform—has become one of the few current political issues receiving relative bipartisan support, even if specific motivations for advancing such aims often differ. Extending Pell Grants to incarcerated students on a more permanent basis has received broad support from Republican leadership, including former Secretaries of Education Betsy DeVos and Lamar Alexander (Green, 2020; Kreighbaum, 2019a). However, despite these signs of

progress, it is important to recognize that in a combative two-party political system in which powerful interest groups exert influence, political trade winds can (and often do) shift. The history of the involvement of higher education in prison cautions against placing too much faith in sustained political support.

Both Second Chance Pell and one of the most progressive and comprehensive state-level prison education policies, New York's Right Priorities initiative, rely almost exclusively on positioning prison education as a tool for the market needs of the state: reduced recidivism equating to taxpayer savings. In press releases for Second Chance Pell, the US Department of Education (2016, 2020) regularly cites a 2013 RAND Corporation study which found that prison education is cost-effective, in part because participants are 43 percent less likely to return to prison. In New York, former Governor Andrew Cuomo's 2016 Right Priorities initiative directly states its purpose as the reduction of recidivism, directing constituents to the RAND report while claiming that the program will "save taxpayer dollars in the long run" (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017; State of New York, 2016).

These justifications may seem politically expedient, but they fail to protect against the inevitability of shifting political and economic realities. Similar shortsightedness led to the 1994 ban on Pell Grants in prisons, as "tough on crime" political pressure prompted a bipartisan push to cut funding for programs, irrespective of effects on recidivism (Gould & SpearIt, 2014). Couching prison education as a cost-savings tool sidesteps the question of whether or not the provision of such opportunities is morally and civically defensible. It leaves policies vulnerable to common criticisms, like one expressed by Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY), who argued against both Second Chance Pell

and Right Priorities by claiming that they "reward lawbreakers" by offering free or subsidized education to prisoners at a time when "law-abiding" students are burdened by exorbitant debts (McCarthy, 2016).

Robust support for higher education in prison will likely continue to require some combination of financial backing from federal and state governments, as well as colleges and universities themselves. The consequences would be dire if federal support for programs ends, or if nascent state initiatives like the Right Priorities plan fail. These are the funding mechanisms that sustain programs. Without them, many would likely be forced to fold. Given how instrumental federal and state initiatives are in ensuring the continued survival and growth of higher education in prison, it is especially important to reflect on how such policies and programs are defended and assessed by key stakeholders, including prison education advocates, federal and state governments, and participating institutions of higher education.

My dissertation takes a three-article approach to explore justifications capable of articulating the moral vigor necessary to sustain a long-term commitment to higher education in prison. It first explores formerly incarcerated student perspectives on the value and purpose of such programs; then, it examines media discourse on the debate to determine the extent to which such discourse aligns (or fails to align) with perspectives offered by incarcerated students and prison education advocates and educators; and, finally, it considers the pedagogical implications of adjusting the lens through which programs are defended. Taken together, each study contributes to literatures examining justifications for higher education in prison.

The Context of Mass Incarceration

The term "mass incarceration" has become so commonplace within the United States that the term itself is rarely disputed. While incarceration rates over the last decade have dipped, the United States still incarcerates a higher percentage of its population than any other country in the world (although, it should be noted that certain countries with sizable prison populations rivalling the United States, such as China, have unknown numbers of prisoners that remain either unreported or underreported [Walmsley, 2018]). Representing 4.2% of the world's population, the United States houses nearly 20% of its prisoners (Prison Policy Initiative, 2019). The war on drugs has significantly contributed to the problem. Since the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, the American prison population has exploded from around 300,000 to what it is today, at just over 1.8 million (Prison Policy Initiative, 2019; Kang-Brown et al., 2021).

Beyond the human cost, the current economic burden of incarceration is astronomical. Typically estimated to cost around $80 billion per year in the United States, recent research suggests that the true cost of incarceration (when factoring in money spent by individuals, families, and communities) might be as high as nearly $1 trillion per year (McLaughlin et al., 2016). These statistics become even more glaring when considered alongside racial and ethnic demographics. While the imprisonment rate for Black Americans has decreased 34% since 2006, the disparity in overall incarceration rates by race remains stark. Black Americans make up 12% of the total population in the United States, yet comprise nearly 33% of its prison population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).

Several reasons persist for why the United States has become so punitive in its approach to criminal justice. Legal scholar Jonathan Simon (2014) identifies a range of causes, including the unresolved legacies of slavery and racial discrimination, the diminishing of the welfare state, comparatively high rates of violent crime, prison privatization, and the highly politicized nature of prosecutorial work and judgeships. Additionally, Simon notes that the contrast between perception and reality in terms of the public's view of the criminal court system hinders our capacity as a society to address these issues. Television and movie dramatizations, as well as the media's coverage of jury trials, often present an image in which defendants' rights are uniformly upheld and protected. As Simon points out, however, the delivery of ideals such as the right to an attorney and a presumption of innocence are often "obstructed by overwhelmed public defenders, plea-bargaining, and inadequate opportunity for pretrial release" (p. 63).

Rather than remedying the situation, our education systems often exacerbate the problem. Research suggests that K-12 schools habitually push the most vulnerable students out of school and inadvertently direct them into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Heitzeg (2009) identifies three principal causes contributing to the aptly named school-to-prison pipeline: the criminalization of bad behavior via zero tolerance policies, the presence of police in schools in the form of "resource officers," and the reliance upon suspensions and expulsions to deal with minor infractions. In examining the effects of such policies, Skiba et al. (2014) found that suspensions and expulsions "in and of themselves increase the risk for future negative outcomes for students," contributing to an already stressed juvenile and criminal justice system (p. 558). Similarly, Novak (2019)

found that student suspensions prior to age 12 increase the odds of future justice system involvement.

The processes that have led to mass incarceration are complex and interconnected. Wealth (or lack thereof) and incarceration rates are very closely correlated. A recent report from the Brookings Institution found that boys growing up in families within the bottom 10 percent of income distribution are 20 times more likely to be imprisoned in their early 30s than those raised within the top 10 percent. Nearly 1 out of every 10 boys born to lowest income families is incarcerated at age 30, accounting for nearly 27% of prisoners at that age (Looney & Turner, 2018). Such data not only suggest serious inequities within our judicial system, but also within our communities and society as a whole. And yet, the source of such high rates of incarceration cannot neatly be boiled down to just one or two root causes. The war on drugs and the privatization of prisons have rightly received serious attention and criticism, but it is important to note that only 20% (*only* here is a relative term) of the incarcerated population is incarcerated as a result of drug offenses, and less than 8% of incarcerated people are held in private prisons (Prison Policy Initiative, 2019). Ending the war on drugs, and prohibiting the privatization of prisons, would substantially decrease the US prison population, but it would scarcely end the era of mass incarceration.

Justifications for Higher Education in Prison

Perhaps as a response to the attention and concern paid to these discouraging trends, higher education in prison is often positioned solely as a tool to lower incarceration rates. Most research into college-level prison education centers around analysis of its effects on recidivism rates and wages earned post release (see, generally,

Aos et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2013; Duwe & Clark, 2014; Kim & Clark, 2013; Pompoco et al., 2017). The influential 2013 study conducted by the RAND Corporation was massive in scale and found that participants in prison education had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating. The odds of gaining employment post-release were found to be 13 percent higher for those who took part in correctional education and rose as high as 28 percent when taking into account vocational training programs in prison. The study concluded that for every dollar spent on prison education, taxpayers save $5 on what would be spent on reincarcerating repeat offenders (Davis et al., 2013).

Reducing recidivism equates to fewer people in prison, which has many benefits beyond the brass tacks of taxpayer economics, among them that parents would be allowed to remain at home with their children, individuals would be free to pursue their own goals and careers, and fewer people would be forced to continue to endure the types of traumas that incarceration can often inflict. While tracking program effects on recidivism is certainly important, the field of empirical research relating to postsecondary education in prison is dominated by such studies. As Austin (2017) notes, the body of research examining the effects of higher education programs on recidivism has reached a point of near saturation:

> There comes a time when further studies on a particular topic or subject matter will have little substantive or scientific value and should no longer be pursued. This would be the case when researchers have squeezed as much knowledge as possible out of numerous well-designed studies, conducted in numerous jurisdictions, completed by numerous competent and independent researchers, over an extended period of time…Such is the case for studies aimed at seeking to

measure the impact of prison education on institutional conduct and recidivism (p. 563).

While the findings of the RAND study are celebrated, and much focus continues to be paid to measuring the effects of higher education on recidivism, many within the prison education community have begun to argue for justification through other means. Prison educators often build their defense of such programs not from an analysis of the effects on recidivism but instead out of the belief that prison education is a moral and ethical responsibility. Harnish (2019), for example, examines the issue through the lens of three philosophical approaches: utilitarianism, pragmatism, and a relational ethic of care. Concluding that such lenses favor "investing in higher education programs in prison" (p. 12), Harnish warns against justification merely on the grounds of recidivism and cautions that such a justification misconstrues the issue, thus perpetuating the idea that the sole "reason for education in prison is to change the person in prison" (p. 11).

Language of reduced recidivism not only furthers the idea that all incarcerated people are in need of transformation, but it also feeds into common misconceptions about the nature of our criminal justice system. As Lewen (2014) suggests: "The majority of Americans believe, in some combination: that people end up in prison because they are bad and have done bad things; that prisons 'teach people a lesson,' that prisons prevent crime; that prisons are good for public safety; and that people in prison deserve to suffer" (p. 355). Rather than help combat such misconceptions, a focus on reducing recidivism risks reaffirming them. The language of reduced recidivism, as Castro (2018) argues, perpetuates the impression that all incarcerated people are in need of reform and thus fails to confront widely documented, systemic inequities within the criminal justice system—

including disparate policing tactics, differences in the availability of quality legal representation, and discrepancies in terms of sentencing and incarceration rates—that disproportionately target communities of color and the financially poor.

Not only does a focus on reducing recidivism feed into common misconceptions, but McCorkel and DeFina (2019) contend that it also risks limiting the types of educational experiences and opportunities made available. By restricting the purpose of prison education to a mere response to the demands of market and state, a primary focus on recidivism rates "threatens to limit higher education in prison to the conferral of vocational skills associated with the low wage labor market" (p. 3). As Harnish (2019) argues, the goal should not be to merely reform prisoners into socially utilizable individuals (individuals who help supply a low-wage job market on release) but to reimagine a relationship of care for incarcerated people. McCorkel and DeFina (2019) claim that what potentially becomes lost in such scenarios are the very features of US higher education that make it so valuable: "knowledge of self and community, clarity of thought and expression, the development of moral and ethical frameworks, the cultivation of communication skills, civil dialogue, creative thought, engagement with political process, and the encouragement of intellectual curiosity" (p. 3). Beyond merely obscuring some of the most prized features of US higher education, anchoring the justification for college-level prison education on reduced recidivism can lead to dehumanizing effects for incarcerated students.

While these contributions from both educators and advocates are valuable and provide key insights into the dialogue of how best to justify college-level prison education programs, they are largely theoretical in nature or are written as part of

reflections on the circumstances of individual programs. It is important to note that they do not often derive from empirical studies, nor do they incorporate the voices and perspectives of incarcerated students themselves, those most directly impacted by such programs. A point of particular emphasis within these contributions is the considerable impact that the justifications undergirding programs can have on the operation and management of the programs themselves, a point further underscored by an understanding of the history of higher education in prison.

Shifting Support: The History of Higher Education in Prison

The history of higher education in American prisons exemplifies the ramifications of fluctuating political support, and emphasizes the need for durable justifications that extend beyond mere appeals to examine effects on recidivism. During the early 1970s, at a time when prison education largely received bipartisan support, the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (later named the Federal Pell Grant Program) was extended to prisoners (McCarty, 2006). The impact of the legislation was transformative: 237 prisons across the country had degree-granting programs in 1976 and 772 did by 1990, a 325 percent increase in just fourteen years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992). Despite the growth in programs, money set aside for prison education still only comprised .006 percent of the funds distributed under Pell Grants for the 1993–1994 academic year, a tiny fraction of the overall Pell Grant budget (US Department of Education, 1994).

By the late 1970s, however, a clear political threat to prison education programs had begun to take shape. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX) introduced legislation to eliminate Pell Grants for prisoners under the guise of a federal crime bill. The bill was defeated, but momentum against Pell Grants for prisoners began to build. In tracking the

history of college-level prison education, Ubah (2004) explains how "each year, during 1982–1994, conservative lawmakers introduced bills to cut back Pell Grants for inmate students. Each bill was defeated, but the efforts had a cumulative impact on the campaign to eliminate the grants" (p. 76).

One specific report played an outsized role in garnering political support against prison education programming. Robert Magnus Martinson's 1974 article, "What Works? Questions and Answers About Prison Reform," was based on a study that examined the effects of prison education on rates of recidivism. Martinson concluded that, "with few and isolated exceptions, the rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have had no appreciable effects on recidivism" (p. 25). The article became known as the "Nothing Works" report, a catchy title for critics of prison education. Martinson (1979) eventually altered his viewpoint, claiming that some programs were indeed beneficial in reducing recidivism, but his shift in perspective received little attention (Martinson's study was later found to suffer from bias, inconsistency, and the omission of facts [Cullen & Gendreau, 2001]). Indeed, public support during the 1980s and 1990s for increasingly punitive measures within the realm of criminal justice directly developed out of the "Nothing Works" movement (Atkin-Plunk & Sloas, 2019; Enns, 2014). Policy makers continued to enact several "tough on crime" policies, many of which are still in operation today, including severe drug laws, mandatory minimum sentences, increased use of solitary confinement, and scared-straight programs for juvenile offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

In addition to increasing the punitiveness of the justice system, the "Nothing Works" slogan helped conservative lawmakers mount opposition to prison education

programming (SpearIt, 2016). By the early 1990s, with a "tough on crime" mentality firmly entrenched, opposition to prison education came from both sides of the political aisle (Zook, 1994). The movement against college-level prison education finally culminated with the passing of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the 1994 Higher Education Reauthorization Act, both signed into law by President Clinton (Gould & SpearIt, 2014). These two pieces of legislation eliminated prisoner access to Pell Grant funding. In press coverage of the legislation, Democrats who sided with the bill cited the seeming inequity of providing aid to those who had committed crimes while middle-class parents struggled to pay for their children's education (Zook, 1994).

The impact on programs was immediate. In the first two years following the passage of the legislation, nearly 41% of directors of higher education in prison programs reported that the sudden lack of Pell Grant availability had "completely changed" their programs (Tewksbury & Taylor, 1996). A 1997 survey conducted by the Corrections Compendium found that "66% of the reporting correctional systems indicated that the elimination of Pell Grants eliminated most if not all of their college course opportunities for inmates" (p. 5). The precise effect was stark: the number of prison systems offering a college certificate dropped by 25 percent, an associate degree by 30 percent, and a baccalaureate degree by 31 percent (Tewksbury & Taylor, 1996). The decline, of course, only continued. Even within states that actively sought other revenue sources to fund prison education, the numbers became stark: for example, 1,078 New York prisoners earned a college degree in 1991 compared to just 141 in 2011, a drop of 87 percent in twenty years (Editorial Board, 2016).

Only recently have the damaging effects of the 1994 ban on federal funding for higher education in prison begun to mend. The 2016 Second Chance Pell initiative has helped enroll roughly 22,000 incarcerated students in more than 100 federal and state prisons in college-level educational programming (US Department of Education, 2021). The success of the federal initiative has now led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons. With funding for the proposal included as part of the recent 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill, prison education advocates are hopeful that the return of federal support in the form of funding will continue to allow for the expansion of educational opportunities inside prisons.

Figure 1 depicts a graphic timeline of Pell Grants for prisoners:

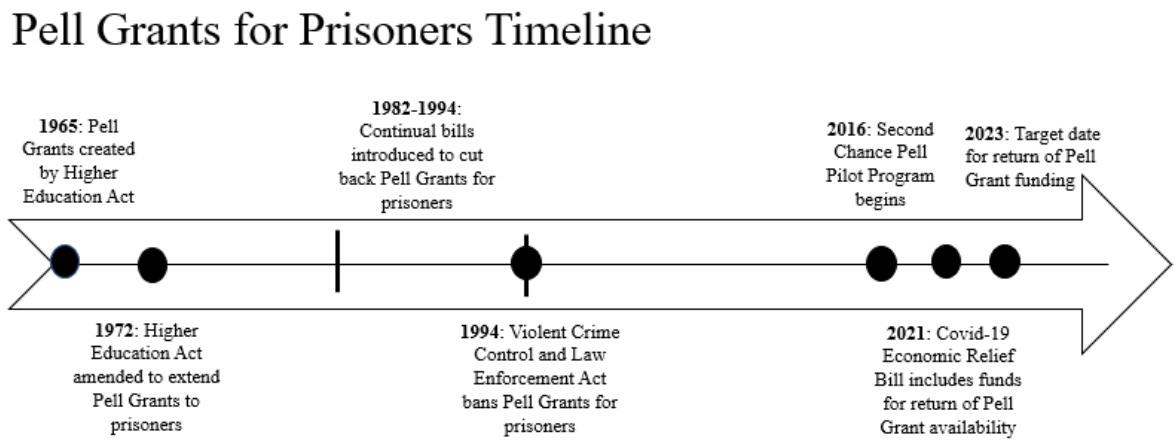


Figure 1. Pell Grants for Prisoners Timeline

The history of higher education in prison is instructive, revealing certain lessons that should be carefully deliberated when reflecting on how best to justify initiatives. It is a history that demonstrates how political trends shift over time and how even potentially strong bipartisan support for a progressive initiative can diminish to the point that even Democrats no longer support it. It also reveals how a single report on rehabilitative

efforts and recidivism rates based on biased and faulty research can have an outsized impact on how lawmakers perceive the issue. Finally, it demonstrates how the argument over recidivism rates does not fundamentally address the inherent fairness or unfairness of educating incarcerated students, especially when lawmakers can always revert to citing the apparent inequity of providing free or heavily subsidized education to "criminals" when costs for "law-abiding" families remain so high. For these reasons, rethinking justification on the grounds of recidivism rates and taxpayer savings for both federal and state initiatives is necessary. As the involvement of higher education institutions in prison has grown in both number and popularity in recent years, it is an opportune time to promote justifications that are durable and speak to the civic principles underlying them.

The Second Chance Pell Program and the Right Priorities Initiative

The Second Chance Pell Program requires partnerships between participating institutions of higher education and state and federal correctional facilities to enroll qualifying prisoners who are within five years of release in postsecondary educational programs (Federal Register, 2015). The program was originally only given three to five years to demonstrate its effectiveness. Its success, however, has been instrumental in developing the framework for the full return in 2023 of eligibility for incarcerated students to Pell Grants. Initially, 63 colleges and universities were selected to participate, but that number is now more than tripling, as the federal initiative is currently expanding to up to 200 different colleges and universities within 42 states and the District of Columbia (US Department of Education, 2016, 2021). The grants supporting individual programs are funded entirely by the federal government, and do not require repayment (Saxon, 2020).

The impact of Second Chance Pell was immediate. By the end of the fall semester 2017—only one year after its implementation—enrollment was up 231 percent, and the number of courses offered had risen 124 percent. Additionally, over 7,000 postsecondary credentials (including college certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees) have been conferred since the start of the initiative until the date of last reporting in 2021 (Chestnut & Wachendorfer, 2021). With research demonstrating that college degree attainment has become both more common, and also more frequently required by employers, the need for access to a college-level education is increasingly vital, a reality that holds similarly true for incarcerated people (Burning Glass Technologies, 2014; NCES, 2017).

At its inception, the Second Chance Pell Program faced serious opposition from lawmakers, particularly from Republicans (Field, 2017). In the immediate aftermath of President Obama's announcement of the program, Representatives Chris Collins (R-NY), Doug LaMalfa (R-CA), and Tom Reed (R-CA) introduced the Kids Before Cons Act (2015), which sought to ban the Department of Education from offering Pell Grants to prisoners. While higher education in prison is currently experiencing a moment of major progress, the political situation is remarkably similar to that of the 1970s, when a relatively small but vocal opposition to federal support for programs began to take root. Legislators, such as Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC), have already begun calling for financial support for higher education in prison to fall solely under the purview of states (Kreighbaum, 2019b).

Prior to Second Chance Pell, the responsibility of supporting prison education programs was left almost entirely to state governments. One of the more progressive

state-level policies, New York's Right Priorities initiative, offers a prime example of what states can do to help support higher education in prison. It provides qualifying prisoners with the opportunity "to receive college-level instruction and earn an Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree, or industry-recognized certificate" (State of New York, 2016). The initiative is detailed and comprehensive, with an established goal of enrolling five hundred new incarcerated students every year over a five-year period, resulting in the creation of twenty-five hundred new enrollment spots in college-level programming.

To qualify for the program, eligible participants must have "no more than five years remaining on their prison sentence" (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). Seven colleges and universities, institutions ranging from some of the most elite in the country (such as Cornell and New York University) to local and community colleges, were selected to share $7.3 million in grant funding to develop and/or sustain college-level prison education programs. Private donations offer an additional $7.5 million in matching funds (McKinley & McKinley, 2016). Altogether, the programs serve students in seventeen correctional facilities across different regions of the state (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017).

The Right Priorities plan, perhaps unsurprisingly, also received serious resistance. Governor Cuomo's 2016 proposal, in fact, is the second iteration of the initiative; a similar 2014 proposal failed due to widespread Republican disapproval (Benjamin, 2014). Most New York Democrats supporting the 2014 initiative, such as State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson, argued that it would be good for public finances: "Governor Cuomo's initiative to fund these courses in our prisons will help affected New Yorkers

build a better future for themselves and their families, and it will result in a reduced prison population that will save taxpayer dollars" (Seiler, 2014). Republicans, however, had a field day with the proposal. Online petitions against the initiative were launched, derisive press releases were delivered, and web videos circulated depicting angry college students questioning why "cons and criminals" were receiving free education while law-abiding citizens were forced to pay exorbitant tuition (Benjamin, 2014).

In response, the 2016 iteration of the initiative made a few significant changes, linking funding for the plan to criminal asset forfeitures and private donations (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). The new financing structure helped persuade lawmakers of the initiative's viability. Still, many Republicans balked at the revised proposal. State Senator Patricia Ritchie's response was typical of the line of argument from Republican leadership: "When we take steps to provide those behind bars with higher educational opportunities at no cost, it sends the wrong message to other, law-abiding individuals who work incredibly hard to pay for college" (Molongoski, 2017). Yet, despite such criticisms, the plan garnered enough support for ratification and implementation (McKinley & McKinley, 2016). As with support at the federal level, however, the viability of the Right Priorities initiative seems largely dependent on the fluctuations of the political landscape.

Considering the history of fragile support for college-level prison education programs at both the state and federal levels, it is especially important to reflect on how such programs come to be defended, justified, and assessed. New York's plan is one of the most comprehensive statewide prison education initiatives in the country, and it should be commended for its achievements. As with Second Chance Pell and the latest

announcement of the return of Pell Grant eligibility, however, its focus on certain outcomes should be carefully considered. Like many programs and initiatives relating to prison education, Right Priorities is defended primarily on the grounds of its impact on recidivism rates and in terms of its prospects for saving taxpayers money. As its stated purpose, the plan asserts that the "program will significantly increase the likelihood of successful reentry into the community thereby reducing recidivism rates" (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). It even directs constituents to the 2013 RAND study which found that participants in prison education programs are 43 percent less likely to recidivate and 13 percent more likely to gain employment after release (State of New York, 2016). As justification for the level of financial investment, the plan claims that it will "save taxpayer dollars in the long run" (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). These recidivist and predominantly economic justifications for programming may seem politically convenient, but they fail to fundamentally address the moral and ethical considerations involved in the provision of higher education opportunities in prison, thus leaving the initiative vulnerable to attack by those who question the moral right to provide "criminals" a free (or heavily subsidized) education.

Potential Negative Pedagogical Effects of Focusing on Reduced Recidivism

Maintaining a primary focus on reduced recidivism not only needlessly imperils such initiatives, but also potentially threatens to restrict and diminish the type of education prisoners receive. Establishing recidivism as a primary objective conveys to students, educators, and the broader public that the purpose of the programming is merely to reform "offenders" into well-functioning citizens. Research into college-level prison education programs reveals the potential for harm in such scenarios. In an exploration of

likely barriers and threats to such programs, Castro and Brawn (2017) engage in a critical analysis of pedagogical challenges unique to the context of prison education, where teaching and learning are often severely hindered by the constraints of the prison itself. They contend that prison education creates a type of paradox for both students and instructors, "where the vision of emancipatory educational experiences inside prison classrooms can never fully take root because penitentiaries, by design, are structured to cultivate the opposite—dehumanization" (p. 100).

Utheim (2016) stresses the complete lack of agency maintained by prisoners: "Incarcerated students live under very controlled circumstances. They are told what to do and say at all times throughout the day: when and how to sleep, eat, shower, use the bathroom, talk, and move" (p. 95). Such loss of self-determination can lead to a form of "institutionalized dehumanization" whereby correctional facilities seek to deprive prisoners of their individual identities. As Castro and Brawn (2017) note, "Freedom and dignity, arguable cornerstones of critical and emancipatory education efforts, are restricted inside prisons" (p. 100).

These are the environments in which prison education programs exist. Prison classrooms are far removed from the "typical" settings of teaching and learning. Unlike more traditional environments, students in prison classrooms are actively serving out punishments, creating a politically and pedagogically fraught space that must be navigated with care. Davis and Michaels (2015) demonstrate just how precarious these situations can be. In their examination of prison-based teaching dynamics and strategies, they posit that many correctional education instructors can "inadvertently [elicit] from students the compulsory narratives of redemption and gratitude that they know to be a

requisite for people moving through the criminal justice system, seeking appeals, approaching paroles, etc." (p. 147).

A focus on reducing recidivism rates as the primary justification for prison education initiatives serves only to reinforce and strengthen the compulsory dynamic of "redemption and gratitude" that is often already latent within prison classrooms. In order to have a more fully realized educational program, one that focuses more on cognitive liberation and the work of reclaiming dignity, it is important that prisoners "are not required to shape [their] goals or pursuits around correctional definitions of rehabilitation" (Davis & Michaels, 2015, p. 153). Such a model threatens to further ingrain many of the damaging interpersonal dynamics that already exist in prison settings, rather than help foster the type of productive, growth-oriented aims often espoused by higher education institutions.

The Right Priorities initiative requires a third-party research entity to be selected and tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of the programs at reducing recidivism rates and increasing "community reengagement" once participants are released from prison (State of New York, 2016). Research into the effects that such programs have on recidivism is important and sensible and can potentially provide valuable insight. The viability of such programming, however, should not hinge on the results of these evaluations. Such a focus communicates a message that the primary purpose of education in prison is merely to reform prisoners, which may inadvertently, as McCorkel and DeFina (2019) suggest, lead to programs employing a purely vocational design in order to respond to the demands of the low-wage labor market. Such a strictly pragmatic focus could preclude incarcerated students from accessing more comprehensive higher

education options that typically aim to fulfill both the professional and critical goals of students. Lowering recidivism rates will likely be a happy byproduct of federal and state programs like Second Chance Pell and the Right Priorities plan, but stating it as a main priority risks turning the educational opportunities the plans afford into means for potential coercion rather than liberation.

Conceptual Framework: Diversionary Reframing

While it may seem politically expedient to defend and justify prison education initiatives on the grounds of their effect on lowering rates of recidivism, it is important to be aware of how such justifications might obscure more salient arguments and thus threaten their long-term sustainability. Burkhardt (2014) provides an analysis of the debate over the privatization of prisons by exploring processes of "diversionary reframing" (p. 280). In defining the term, Burkhardt describes how attention (specifically in the context of the media) to one "frame," or central organizing idea, often obscures or deflects attention from other potential framing mechanisms. Burkhardt contends that there is "a finite set of frames that will resonate with the public," and therefore the prioritization of certain ideas and arguments over others greatly impacts how political debates are received and considered (p. 281).

For prison education advocates, the "ends" of increasing higher education opportunities in prison may seem a morally just cause, yet the "means" of justifying programs by referencing recidivism rates and taxpayer savings are nonetheless a tactic of diversionary reframing. Such arguments sidestep the issue of whether they are in fact morally and civically justifiable. Reliance on the frame of recidivism has serious consequences, potentially obscuring arguments that more fully capture the fundamental

need for higher education in prison. While criminal justice reform may be experiencing a temporary period of broad-based support, the expectation that such support will continue should be tempered. Without more robust moral justifications that focus on not depriving the most vulnerable in our society of access to higher education, shifts in the popularity of criminal justice reform—which are likely to occur, given an understanding of the history of higher education in prison—threaten to limit the likelihood that such initiatives will survive.

Burkhardt's model provides the broad, overarching conceptual framework that connects the three articles of this dissertation project. His model not only forms the rationale for conducting interviews with incarcerated students to learn how and where they derive meaning from their education, but also for conducting a content analysis of media representations of the debate over prison education, geared toward discovering which particular "frames" either receive or do not receive attention. The findings from these two studies inform a discussion in the third article of teaching strategies responsive to prison environments and higher education in prison programs.

Research Questions for Each Dissertation Article

Given both the history of tenuous support for higher education in prison, as well as the current prioritization among advocates to sustain and support federal and state initiatives, my dissertation delivers the following three articles:

Beyond Recidivism: Exploring Formerly Incarcerated Student Perspectives on the Value of Higher Education in Prison

As previously noted, the majority of research into postsecondary prison education centers around analysis of its effects on recidivism. Many within the prison education

community, however, have begun to argue for justification through other means, often anchoring their defense of such programs upon an ethic of care for prisoners (Castro, 2018; Harnish, 2019; Lewen, 2014). Largely lacking from empirical research exploring the purpose and value of such programs are the voices and perspectives of students who have been the beneficiaries of such opportunities. The purpose of the first article in this project is to help fill this gap by exploring the experiences of formerly incarcerated students who participated in the Boston University Prison Education Program, one of the longest running programs in the country.

Such research is not only important in its own right (since these are the types of individuals most impacted by such programs, their voices should be prioritized), but also findings from this study provide a pathway toward locating more durable justifications for higher education in prison. Student perspectives and understandings extend far beyond a purely recidivist lens. Insights not only into *where* formerly incarcerated students locate meaning and value, but also *how* they go about constructing such meaning (with a particular focus on the types of educational experiences they found most meaningful) is particularly useful. As such, the primary research question for the first article is: How and where do formerly incarcerated students locate meaning, value, and purpose within their own participation in higher education in prison?

Talking Past Each Other: The Debate over College-Level Prison Education as Represented in New York Print Media, 2013-2020

Findings from the first article help inform discussion of the second article, a thematic content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) of 243 articles printed in six different New York-based newspapers from February 1, 2013 to January 31, 2020. The study is

grounded in New York, a state on the forefront of statewide prison education policy initiatives. The timeframe (Feb. 2013-Jan. 2020) is designed to cover a full year prior to Governor Cuomo's failed 2014 proposal and extend to four full years after the success of his 2016 Right Priorities plan. During this timeframe, the 2016 Second Chance Pell Pilot Program was also implemented, allowing for analysis of both federal and state policy debates within New York-based media coverage.

Extensive scholarship has attempted to examine how matters of crime and justice are portrayed in the media (see, generally, Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018; Blakely & Bumphus, 2005; Montes et al., 2020). Montes et al. (2020) describe a common finding, noting a tendency within media coverage to "oversimplify dimensions that may bear on discussions about policies aimed at crime, criminal justice, and corrections" (p. 1243). Such findings lead to important questions relating to policy debates impacting higher education in prison. The primary research questions for my second article are:

1.) How is the debate over higher education in prison represented in the media?

2.) Does the media have a tendency to oversimplify the debate?

3.) If so, which framings of the debate are commonly invoked, and, alternatively, which framings remain either obscured or ignored?

Andragogy in Prison: Higher Education in Prison and the Tenets of Adult Education

The third article, a conceptual paper, is motivated by the findings produced by the first two articles, particularly the first. It explores the use of andragogical teaching methods (Knowles et al., 2020)—those associated with the tenets of adult education—in the context of higher education in prison classrooms. Research suggests prisoners often

experience a loss of self-determination, largely due to the restrictive environment of the prison itself (Davis & Michaels, 2015; Rodríguez, 2010). With the aim of empowering students to maintain agency over their own educational pursuits, the tenets of andragogy can help combat such harm. The rich descriptions of how and where incarcerated students locate meaning within their education found in the first article inform this conceptual analysis of andragogical teaching practices in carceral settings. The research question this third article addresses is: How can the tenets of andragogy help address enduring issues within teaching strategies and curricula development for higher education in prison programs?

A Brief Note on the Overall Structure of the Dissertation Project

The three articles appearing in this dissertation are presented as they were submitted (or *re*submitted) to academic journals. As such, there is some overlap between the literatures drawn upon within this introductory chapter, the articles themselves, and the concluding chapter. While such overlap is difficult to avoid within the structure of a three-article dissertation, the articles are both meant to stand on their own and be in conversation with each other. The concluding chapter synthesizes the contributions of each article into a more cohesive whole, with the aim being that the overall project of the dissertation itself will provide its own unique contribution to literatures relating to higher education in prison.

Positionality

I approach each of these studies from the perspective of an advocate for higher education in prison who believes justifications for higher education in prison should extend beyond a purely recidivist framing. I have extensive experience teaching literature

and composition courses in prison, both for nearly five years within the Boston University Prison Education Program, as well as another two years within the Boston College Prison Education Program. I have also recently assumed directorship of the Boston College program. Prior to my experiences teaching, I was a criminal defense investigator for the Public Defender Service in Washington, D.C., investigating level one felonies on behalf of defendants who could not afford their own legal representation.

As a result of these varied experiences, I have my own beliefs and convictions when it comes to issues of criminal justice reform and providing higher education opportunities in prison. For this reason, it has been particularly important to consider my own positionality throughout the research and writing process, so as not to impose my own beliefs on research participants during interviews, or within the various forms of data analysis employed within the three articles. Within the interviews for the first article, I attempted to avoid leading participants toward any type of desired answers. For example, one participant offered responses to my interview questions and then would frequently comment, “I don’t know if that’s what you are looking for.” In such cases, I made sure to reiterate that there were no right or wrong responses to my questions, emphasizing that what I was most interested in as a researcher was learning from participants’ experiences and perspectives, and how *they* thought about the issues involved.

In terms of the analytic processes involved, I attempted to focus on how the data related to my research questions and conceptual framework, irrespective of my own preconceptions or potential biases. It was also particularly necessary to be aware of how my own background differed from those of my research participants. My own

experiences as a White, middle-class program director, instructor, and doctoral candidate often substantially differed from the backgrounds of participants in terms of race, financial status, and educational background (among countless other differences). I aimed to remain mindful of these differences, actively considering how they might impact each individual study. As such, I provide positionality statements as part of each individual article.

Contribution and Significance

At the current moment, the primary focus within higher education in prison is to ensure that polices helping to sustain programs—whether they be at the federal or state level—remain in place. Legislative history reveals the dramatic consequences when such policies are abandoned. While politicians may occasionally have to rely on some form of instrumental, recidivist arguments to ensure that policies take root, it is important that such framings do not undercut or devalue more foundational civic arguments, ones that ultimately provide a stronger and more durable defense of the need for higher education in prison.

By interviewing those who are most directly impacted by such programs, the first article in my dissertation contributes to the work of identifying robust, student-driven justifications for higher education in prison. The second article demonstrates the extent to which media representations of the debate align—or fail to align—with current scholarship relating to the value of higher education in prison If the media does, in fact, oversimplify the debate over higher education in prison (as Montes, et al. [2020] suggest is often the case with matters of crime and justice), it is important to consider how such oversimplifications may impact public perception and policy making. And, finally, the

third article explores the potential value of employing andragogical teaching methods in prison contexts, especially in how it can respond to a readjustment of the lens through which higher education in prison programs are defended. In combination with each other, the insights gained from these three dissertation articles will not only assist policy makers in developing and expanding sustainable initiatives, but also help inform educators and administrators in the creation of effective teaching strategies and program curricula.

CHAPTER TWO: BEYOND RECIDIVISM: EXPLORING FORMERLY INCARCERATED STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

Abstract

This study investigates how and where formerly incarcerated students locate meaning and value within their own educational experiences in prison. Employing a phenomenological approach, it explores the experiences of 21 formerly incarcerated students who participated in the Boston University Prison Education Program, one of the longest running higher education in prison programs in the country. It finds that participation in such programs offers a much-needed space to participate in a community of mutual respect and mentorship, develop skills and explore personal interests, and regularly engage in noncoercive, non-prescriptive practices of self-reflection and inquiry.

Introduction

After more than two decades without federal support for college-level prison education, the 2016 Second Chance Pell Program has been instrumental in assisting colleges and universities in the development and expansion of higher education opportunities in prison. Initially, 63 colleges and universities were selected to participate in the program, but that number is now potentially more than tripling, as the initiative is currently expanding to up to 200 colleges and universities throughout the country (US Department of Education, 2021). The program has been so well received that it has led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons, set to take effect as early as 2023, with funding for the proposal included in the 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill (Burke, 2021; US Department of Education, 2021).

Given the legacy of tenuous federal support for higher education in prison (Gould & SpearIt, 2014; Ubah, 2004), the current focus among many prison education advocates is to ensure that support for such initiatives is made durable. A schism has developed, however, between those who primarily seek to highlight program effects on recidivism and taxpayer savings, and those who are wary of narratives overly reliant on reduced recidivism, instead aiming to promote justifications that are student-centered and speak to the moral and/or civic principles underlying programs (see, generally, Castro, 2018; Harnish, 2019; McCorkel & DeFina, 2019). One particular fear is that a focus on recidivism may threaten to restrict and diminish the types of educational opportunities made available to incarcerated students, as programs may become prone to taking a strictly vocational and/or virtual learning approach (Conway, 2020). This concern is particularly relevant considering the wide range of higher education institutions included

within the Second Chance Pell experimental sites, among which are four-year public and private universities, as well as two-year community, technical, and junior colleges (US Department of Education, 2020).

Despite increased attention on the particular ways in which prison education initiatives are justified, the perspectives of students themselves who have been the beneficiaries of such programs have remained largely unexamined. The purpose of this study is to help fill this gap by exploring the experiences of formerly incarcerated students who participated in the Boston University (BU) Prison Education Program, one of the longest running programs in the country. The research question guiding this study is: how and where do formerly incarcerated students locate meaning, value, and purpose within their own participation in higher education in prison? My analysis employs phenomenological methods that give voice to the experiences of formerly incarcerated students themselves. I ultimately argue that higher education in prison breaks cycles of both literal and figurative imprisonment, offering students a space unlike anything found elsewhere inside prisons, a space where they take part in a community of mutual respect and mentorship, are encouraged to develop skills and explore personal interests, and regularly engage in noncoercive, non-prescriptive practices of self-reflection and inquiry.

Background

History of Higher Education in Prison

The history of higher education in US prisons exemplifies the damaging consequences of inconsistent institutional and political support. In 1972, the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant (later named the Federal Pell Grant Program) extended to incarcerated students the subsidization of college education costs for the first time

(McCarty, 2006). The effect of the legislation was transformative. Littlefield and Wolford's (1982) national survey of post-secondary prison education programs found that Pell Grants were by far the most frequently cited source of funding for programs (p. 17). They not only helped sustain existing programs, but also provided the necessary financial support for the development of new programs: 237 prisons across the country had degree-granting programs in 1976 compared to 772 by 1990, a 325 percent increase in just fourteen years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992).

By the early 1990s, however, a "tough on crime" mindset had become firmly entrenched within the political sphere, with the push to ban Pell Grants in prisons supported by a majority of both Republican and Democrat legislators (Gould & SpearIt, 2014; Zook, 1994). The movement finally culminated with the passing of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and the 1994 Higher Education Reauthorization Act, both signed into law by President Clinton (Wright, 2001). The two pieces of legislation combined to eliminate access to Pell Grant funding inside prisons. The impact was immediate. A 1997 survey conducted by the Corrections Compendium found that "66% of the reporting correctional systems indicated that the elimination of Pell Grants eliminated most if not all of their college course opportunities for inmates" (p. 5). The precise outcome was stark: the number of prison systems offering a college certificate dropped by 25 percent, an associate degree by 30 percent, and a baccalaureate degree by 31 percent (Tewksbury & Taylor, 1996).

Only recently have the damaging effects of the 1994 ban on federal funding for higher education in prison begun to mend. The 2016 Second Chance Pell Pilot Program has helped enroll roughly 22,000 incarcerated students in more than 100 federal and state

prisons in college-level educational programming (US Department of Education, 2021). The success of the federal initiative has now led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons. With funding for the proposal included as part of the recent 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act (better known as the COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill), prison education advocates are hopeful that the return of federal support in the form of funding will continue to allow the expansion of educational opportunities inside prisons.

Common Justifications for Higher Education in Prison

The majority of research into college-level prison education centers around analyzing its effects on recidivism rates and wages earned post release (see, generally, Davis et al., 2013; Duwe & Clark, 2014; Kim & Clark, 2013; Pompoco et al., 2017). The most influential of these studies is the 2013 meta-analysis conducted by the RAND Corporation. The study was massive in scale and found that participants in prison education had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating. It concluded that for every dollar spent on prison education, taxpayers save $5 on what would be spent on reincarcerating repeat offenders (Davis et al., 2013). Given these data, it is perhaps unsurprising that both Second Chance Pell, as well as the congressional measure to renew Pell Grant availability in prisons, rely almost exclusively on positioning prison education as a tool for the market needs of the state: reduced recidivism equating to taxpayer savings. In press releases, the US Department of Education (2016, 2020) claims programs will save taxpayers money, directly citing the findings of reduced recidivism and program cost-effectiveness reported in the 2013 RAND Corporation study.

Reducing recidivism is important for a whole host of reasons, among which include keeping families intact, allowing individuals to continue to pursue personal and

professional goals, and not forcing people to repeatedly endure the types of traumas that incarceration often causes. And, yet, despite how celebrated the findings are within the RAND report, many within the prison education community have begun to caution against justifications overly reliant on narratives of recidivism (Castro, 2018; Conway, 2020; Lewen, 2014). The most common line of critique contends that positioning programs merely as a cost-savings measure sidesteps the issue of whether or not the provision of such opportunities is morally and civically defensible (Conway, 2020). It leaves policies vulnerable to common criticisms, like those expressed by Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY), who argued against programs, claiming they "reward lawbreakers" by offering free education to incarcerated students at a time when "law-abiding" students are burdened by exorbitant debts (McCarthy, 2016). Reliance on reduced recidivism may seem politically convenient, but without more foundational justifications, the risk of repeating history remains. After all, similar shortsightedness is what led to the 1994 ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated students, with "tough-on-crime" political pressure prompting a bipartisan push to cut funding for programs irrespective of effects on recidivism (Gould & SpearIt, 2014; Ubah, 2004).

Beyond the survival of programs, many advocates worry that the language of reduced recidivism may negatively impact the types of educational experiences programs offer, inadvertently reinforcing some of the more damaging interpersonal dynamics already latent within carceral settings (Castro & Gould, 2018). As Davis and Michaels (2015) note, the goal of lowering recidivism can unintentionally "[elicit] from students the compulsory narratives of redemption and gratitude that they know to be a requisite for people moving through the criminal justice system" (p. 147). A hyper-focus on

recidivism also fails to confront the widely documented, systemic inequities within the criminal justice system that disproportionately target communities of color and the financially poor. In short, many advocates contend, as Lewen (2014) insists, that rather than depend on recidivism rates to justify programs, the aim should be to help build more just communities and to help counteract "the harm that is perpetuated by our prison system" (p. 354). Building on this exact point, Karpowitz (2017) suggests higher education in prison "should be conceived less about how people in prison might change and more about how we, as a society increasingly defined by the scope and quality of our prisons, might change ourselves" (p. 161-162).

Conceptual Framework

While these contributions from educators and advocates are valuable and provide key insights into alternative justifications for college-level programs, they are largely either theoretical in nature or provided as part of reflections on the circumstances of individual programs. They do not derive from empirical studies, nor do they incorporate the voices and perspectives of incarcerated students themselves. While it is clear that an acute focus on recidivism may potentially dehumanize and pathologize students, diminishing their overall sense of worth (Castro & Gould, 2018), it remains unclear what might help encourage the opposite, liberatory experiences centering the inherent dignity of students.

Following Karpowitz (2017), this study is conceptually grounded within the belief that it is important to conceive of programs as something other than merely a means for changing or rehabilitating "offenders." The contours of this framing emerged, in part, from my own experiences teaching Composition and Literature courses within the Boston

University Prison Education Program from 2012-2017, as well as from my current experiences as both director and faculty within a separate higher education in prison program in the Northeast United States. These various experiences serve as a form of observational data that help inform and orient my own perspectives in relation to both data collection and analysis. By interviewing and seeking to better understand the experiences of those most directly impacted by such educational opportunities, this study aims to locate and identify humanized, student-centered justifications for supporting higher education in prison programs that extend far beyond a purely recidivist lens. Such insights not only can help better defend programs and initiatives, but can also inform faculty and program administrators of the types of experiences students find most relevant and meaningful.

Methods

Context of the Boston University Prison Education Program

The data reported are from interviews with 21 formerly incarcerated students who participated in the Boston University Prison Education Program, one of the longest-running higher education in prison programs in the country. The program began offering college credits to incarcerated students at MCI-Norfolk—a men's prison 45-minutes southwest of Boston—in 1972. In 1991, the program expanded and began offering courses at MCI-Framingham, the only women's prison in the state, a site 30 minutes west of Boston (Boston University Prison Education Program, n.d.).

During the 1980s and early 90s, the BU program was one of several universities in Massachusetts to offer college-level courses inside prisons. However, after the 1994 ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated students, it was the only program in the state to

survive. Because its funding was backed by the university itself (rather than relying on federal support), the ban on Pell Grants did not fundamentally alter its funding structure. At the time, students could apply credits toward earning a BA, and even potentially pursue an MA (this option has since ended). Students released from prison prior to graduating were also allowed to continue their studies on campus at Boston University. Current students in the program can earn a BA in Liberal Studies and/or an undergraduate certificate in Interdisciplinary Studies. Since the program's inception, a total of 353 students have graduated from the program with a Bachelor of Arts, and 28 of those went on to also receive a master's degrees within the program (Boston University Prison Education Program, n.d.). The BU program comprises a strong case selection for inquiry, both because of its longstanding liberal arts tradition—liberal arts continue to serve nationally as the primary educational focus of most credit-bearing programs (Craft et al., 2019)—but also because its programming has remained uninterrupted since 1972, a rarity for higher education in prison programs given the impact of the 1994 ban on Pell Grants for incarcerated students.

Recruitment and Sample

The snowballed sample for this study includes 21 formerly incarcerated students, each of whom participated in the Boston University Prison Education Program. Participation in the study was voluntary. See Appendix A for the recruitment flyer that the former director of the Boston University Prison Education Program, Jenifer Drew, and the current director, Mary Ellen Mastrorilli, sent to potential participants. Interviews were conducted between January-May 2021. See Appendix B for the interview protocol. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 72, with a median age of 43. The earliest enrollment

in the program among participants was 1974, and the most recent enrollment was in 2019. The average date for initial enrollment was in 2006. Among those included in the study, 13 had received their BA (12 of whom earned the degree while incarcerated, while 1 participant finished on campus at BU). Eight participants had not yet completed the degree, although 5 were either currently enrolled on campus at Boston University or planned to enroll within the coming academic year. One participant also earned an MA from BU while incarcerated.

The average self-reported GPA among participants was 3.70, with a range of 3.00 to 4.00. The sample included 11 White participants, 5 Black participants, 4 Latino/a/x or Hispanic participants, and 1 who self-identified as multiracial Native American. The sample broadly maps onto the racial demographics inside Massachusetts prisons (43% White, 27% Black, 26%, Latino/a/x or Hispanic, 1% Native American [Vera Institute of Justice, 2019]). All participants were born in the United States. The sample included 11 men and 10 women. Appendix C provides a fuller demographic breakdown of participants included in the sample.

Data Sources

Data sources include hour-long interviews with each participant. Due to social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted via Zoom. Questions were designed to elicit responses from participants in which they reflected on and provided insight into where they found meaning, purpose, and value in their educational experiences as part of the BU program. A set of questions early in interviews focused on important moments—both good and bad—within a participant's educational history before, during, and after their incarceration. These questions helped

contextualize participants' experiences in prison education within their overall educational histories (Kolar et al., 2015). To enhance policy relevance, a set of questions were also designed to elicit responses regarding aspects participants believed important for policy makers to highlight in the defense of higher education in prison initiatives (Ion et al., 2019). By doing so, the study aims to put policy makers in conversation with those most impacted by their efforts.

Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, analyzed, and coded using a qualitative software analysis program (NVivo). Following an interpretive phenomenological approach, the study employs thematic analysis, a creative process aimed at uncovering the meanings of human experience (van Manen, 2014). An open-ended whole-part-whole analysis process was conducted that included three distinct stages: a holistic reading of the text, a selective reading, and a detailed line-by-line reading (Vagle, 2018). Open-ended readings were conducted to understand the experiences of participants while simultaneously preserving ontological possibilities (Ho et al., 2017). Inductive analysis was undertaken at this stage, a process of coding data without adherence to preexisting coding frameworks or tightly bounded analytic preconceptions (Nowell et al., 2017). Notes were taken of descriptive words, phrases, lift-out quotes, and clusters-of-text revealing insight into the phenomenon of how and where participants located meaning within their educational experiences. Finally, comments, phrases, and ideas were examined and organized into themes across participants (Vagle, 2018).

Positionality

I approached this study from the perspective of an advocate for higher education in prison. I have several years' experience teaching and working within the Boston University Prison Education Program, as well as within a separate higher education in prison program in the Northeast US, one for which I have recently assumed the role of program director. Prior to these experiences, I also worked as a criminal defense investigator for the public defender office in Washington, D.C., investigating level one felonies on behalf of defendants who could not afford their own legal representation. As a result of these various experiences working within the criminal justice system, I have my own beliefs and convictions when it comes to issues of criminal justice reform and providing higher education opportunities in prison.

In addition to my own personal work experiences, it is likely that my educational background and identity as a White, middle-class male mediate my perspectives on issues relating to crime and justice, as well as higher education writ large. Given data on the racial and economic disparities in terms of incarceration, this was especially important to keep in mind, both during interviews with participants but also during data analysis. For this reason, Vagle's (2018) practice of bridling (in essence, a process of journaling in order to explicate and clarify my own thoughts and assumptions) was important. As Vagle notes, bridling "does not mean that we can totally set aside our own presuppositions, but it does mean that we try to own them, so to speak, and interrogate how they might influence the analysis" (p. 110). Bridling is a self-reflective and iterative process, one which was important in ensuring that the voices and perspectives of participants were prioritized over my own potential preconceptions and/or biases.

Findings

The reduction of the risk of recidivism was, unsurprisingly, found to be important to participants. In fact, as Abby (all names pseudonyms)—a White woman in her mid-40s—described, the opportunity to lower the likelihood of ever returning to prison was one of the biggest draws for participants in the application and initial enrollment process. Citing her reasons for enrolling in the BU program, Abby stated simply: "There is data that for every year of education someone gets, that's a year between themself and an act of recidivism. It keeps people from getting in trouble again." The importance placed on the reduction of recidivism was not merely experienced at the outset of the program. For Felipe, a Hispanic man in his early 40s, the reduction of this risk remained vital for him long after his graduation and release from prison. When asked how he would defend programs, Felipe was direct: "Recidivism, man. I haven't been back yet."

If helping to break cycles of literal imprisonment was found among participants to be important (which it certainly was), no less important or real were the ways in which involvement in the program offered students a liminal space that helped disrupt a figurative sense of imprisonment. This was a sentiment shared by almost every participant in the study. Jeremy, a Black man in his mid-30s who is now enrolled in graduate school outside of prison, commented on the distinct difference between the environment of the classroom and the prison itself: "Yeah, you're locked up. You know, you're an inmate…you're behind bars, you're a criminal. But when [the correctional officer] is gone, it's like we're in a free space." Similarly, Pamela, a woman in her early 50s who self-described as multiracial Native American, highlighted how the program enabled her to find a measure of freedom: "I took advantage of every opportunity to kind

of open doors for me; not necessarily open the doors to get out, but open doors for my own personal freedom."

This sentiment was not restricted to any one type of identity in prison. It was shared almost unanimously across participants. Hugh, a White man in his early 50s, became emotional when commenting on the liberatory quality of his experiences:

> It was freeing me from a life I once had, and it was setting me up. It was liberating. Every moment of it, I savored; every fucking page I read, typing papers on a typewriter with a dictionary in hand…I mean, it was the focus of my entire existence in Norfolk. It meant everything. It was priority number one. It really just liberated me, and made me feel like a fucking human being in the darkest moments of my life.

These types of perspectives are crucial in terms of locating justifications for higher education in prison that extend beyond a purely recidivist lens. I argue that three specific dynamics within participants' experiences of the Boston University program help explain the types of liberatory experiences many found so important: 1.) it helps create a community of mutual respect and mentorship hard to find anywhere else in prison; 2.) it offers opportunities to develop skills and explore personal interests; and 3.) it enables students to engage in noncoercive, non-prescriptive practices of self-reflection and inquiry that are particularly needed in carceral settings. These three themes are vital in considering how and where incarcerated students locate meaning, value, and purpose within higher education in prison, and lead to deeper understandings of why such programs are so essential.

Theme 1: Creating a Community of Mutual Respect and Mentorship

The first theme emerging from the data was the great value placed by participants on the communal aspect of the program, centered around learning, mutual respect, and mentorship. For many participants, this facet even outweighed certain instrumental benefits, such as earning a bachelor of arts. As Jennifer, a White woman in her early 60s who graduated from the program nearly three decades ago, recalled, "the idea that I would get my college degree was actually, I mean, I didn't have that kind of objective…it was just to study and learn, and to be among people who learned and taught."

For Regina, a White woman now in her mid-50s, participation in the program signified an opportunity for a healthier social environment. She lamented the lack of meaningful social experiences available in prison, describing how prison could often be depressing simply because, "you don't want to hang out at the table shooting cards or talking crap." Developing relationships was often limited to what Regina described as involvement in petty conversations, "talking and reminiscing about, oh my God, we did this to that one, or that to this one." Regina described the relationships formed within the BU program as entirely different: "the class was just transformative, because it brought people that were in the class closer. Because in an environment like that, you don't like everybody in your classroom. You may not trust everybody in your classroom, but you have mutual respect." She continued to describe how important it was for her to have access to "intelligent conversations where you're picking at each other's brains." She mentioned one of her most meaningful personal transformations within the program was not just in the recognition that others cared about her, but also in how she became invested in the success of her peers: "I cared about the people that were in my classes."

The recognition of each other's humanity was something Jeremy found particularly important as well, citing the way in which the prison environment typically divided people by "ethnicities or different crimes." Overcoming preconceptions could sometimes be challenging, but it was part of what created trust and human connection within the program:

> There were probably some guys that you looked at as tough guys, and maybe some guys you took as though they wouldn't have an intelligent bone in their body, and you go there and you hear them talk and reason…and you hear [them] and see like, wow, not only can you see that they have those abilities, but you also see that they're more like you, and you're also more relatable to them…You see that you have this thing in common, which is like a brain and, you know, the human aspects, like how [you have] the capacity for compassion for these people.

The fostering of communal bonds, however, was not solely restricted to occur among peers. The mentorship received from faculty in the program also encouraged a sense of community. Nelson, a Black man in his late 60s who graduated the program in the early 2000s, noted that what stood out most for him upon entering the program was the way in which faculty "teach you and treat you as a student, rather than merely as a prisoner." This stood in direct contrast to how Nelson felt treated by prison staff, who "assigned [him] little worth or value." Inside the classroom, faculty not only treated students with "dignity," but regularly emboldened students, as Nelson expressed, "to display some of the humanity that existed inside of you."

With mentorship from faculty, participants regularly cited the dual nature of camaraderie and accountability. Jeffrey—a White man in his mid-50s currently finishing

his last credits on campus at BU—reflected on his relationships with faculty by contrasting them with the majority of other relationships inside prison, where "people fuck with you" all day. He cited several faculty members in demonstrating the difference between the prison and classroom environment:

> When you sit in a BU classroom, I'm with my friend Patrick. I'm with my buddy, Dev. Oh, there's Jenifer, how's it going? You know, and it was all business. You know, nobody was getting over, nobody was…nobody gives a shit about why you're in prison. They care about you and, 'are you getting your education?' 'Do you need help?' 'Anything we can do for you?' And that gave me a sense of humanness. Like, you're not judging me, you're treating me as an equal, and I will never forget that.

For Jeffrey, it wasn't just friendship and human connection that made relationships with faculty meaningful. It was also, simultaneously, the offering of a non-patronizing form of accountability: "They didn't show us, in my opinion, any favoritism…like, 'Oh, we're gonna give these guys good grades because they're inmates.' No. You had to earn that grade."

Participants described how the sense of community fostered within the program extended beyond it, and even beyond the prison itself. During various semesters, the program offered students opportunities to take courses alongside "on-campus" students enrolled at MIT and Harvard, as well to participate in mentorship programs that brought experienced tutors into the prison. One faculty member teaching a Shakespeare course even brought professional actors into class to perform for and alongside students. Zachary, a White man in his early 30s, remarked that these experiences connected

students to the outside world, particularly because these were “outsiders” who treated students with respect and open-mindedness: “They weren't biased, they weren’t prejudiced. And I didn't feel judged when I walked into a classroom. I didn't feel that feeling [of someone implying] ‘I think I'm better than you.’” Zachary said that no matter who came into the prison, the purpose was always “to challenge your intellect” to expand beyond the confines of the prison itself.

For participants, the bonds developed within the program were so personally meaningful that many continued to strengthen them even after release. Darren, a Black man in his early 40s, described: “Those of us who are free now, we're all still a part of a brotherhood. It never goes away, and that’s the beauty of something like that.” Many participants expressed how relationships developed within the program among peers and with faculty members created a network of support upon release. Sophia, a White woman in her mid-20s who was released from prison within the last year, remarked: “There were a lot of girls I met through being in class that I still am in contact with. And that is a big outlet for me because I’m needing help on the outside now.” For Hernán, a Hispanic man in his early 40s, the friendships have become more than just a system of support. They are “real genuine” friendships built on mutual respect and fellowship: “There were four of us, we went to Miami about two years ago. I’m in contact with them to this day. Sometimes they come by the house, have some laughs. It built a strong bond between us individuals. Just behind the wall, and then it came to the outside.” Despite the often oppressive and stratified environment inside prison, participants in the BU program were able to establish and develop meaningful, long-lasting relationships between peers, with

faculty, and even with program "outsiders," that often extended beyond the mere terms of a prison sentence.

Theme 2: The Development of Tangible Skills and the Exploration of Personal Interests

The development of tangible skills and the deepening of personal interests experienced within the Boston University program were often perceived by participants in direct relation both to their lives prior to incarceration, as well as to their experiences within the confines of the prison itself. A common lament among participants was either having underperformed or having had bad experiences within their own educational history prior to incarceration. In line with recent scholarship on the topic, participants often attributed these negative experiences to their own immaturity or lack of preparation at a younger age, and/or to lack of sufficient opportunity, structural support, and academic encouragement (Kallman, 2020; Thomas, 2012). Participants variously described themselves at earlier ages as being "not yet ready for education," "[not having] the tools needed," "not open to classwork," "easily sidetracked," "directionless," "unsupported," and "not mature enough" to be successful in school.

Often, these negative experiences were the result of a confluence of factors, among them: inadequate or improper conduct by teachers or other school officials, challenging family dynamics, complex and interrelated layers of oppression, as well as potential behavioral issues and/or poor decision making at a young age. The case of Adrián, a Hispanic man in his mid-30s, provides an example of the types of challenges that many participants faced as children and young adults. Adrián described himself as a smart kid, precocious, and eager to learn. He faced several adversities, however, that

made his school experiences difficult, and at times, even traumatic. He was diagnosed at a young age with ADHD, and also had "lots of issues with anger," including "authority issues" and a "general distrust of adults." He lived in a low-income, predominantly Black and Hispanic neighborhood in Boston with a grade school that was overcrowded and under-resourced. Additionally, Adrián described that his "biological father wasn't there for [him]," and he was also "treated horribly by [his] stepfather." His mother loved him greatly, but struggled with alcoholism and drug use.

On top of these challenges, Adrián's first memory of school was traumatic. In kindergarten, Adrián would occasionally "raise hell" (he was quick to note, however, that he does not remember "doing anything particularly heinous" for a six- or seven-year-old). His teacher, however, responded reprehensively:

> [He] put me in a diaper, and paraded me around the school from classroom to classroom, introducing me as AJ the baby. I want to act like a baby, so I was being treated like one. And that was one of my first experiences, and I just remember the trauma at the smirks, the laughing, and you know, that was probably one of the most defining moments for me [in school].

Adrián's relationship to school remained relatively consistent throughout most of his childhood and young adulthood. He "always genuinely enjoyed learning," but his view of "teachers and people of authority" was so negative that he ended up dropping out of high school in the ninth grade. As an act of defiance, he earned his GED "without studying" and "without paying attention" to his teachers, just to show that it wasn't any "lack of intelligence" that caused him not to succeed in school.

Many of these challenges, adversities, and traumas that participants experienced prior to incarceration had lasting effects that were then only exacerbated by their experiences inside prison walls. Participants described surviving prison as a harrowing experience, and as in no way conducive to personal growth. The prison was routinely described as "a depressing place," one in which the majority of people were either "languishing" or frequently involved in "pettiness," "drama," and/or "infighting." The environment of the prison was at turns either "isolating" and "lonely" for participants, or else "wild" and "noisy." Many participants felt as though they faced a near "constant stigma" (both "internal and external") regarding their own status as an incarcerated person. As Abby remarked, "some of the guards felt that we were garbage." Participants perceived that the most common result of experiencing incarceration was to either become "institutionalized" and "numb" to the environment, or else "angry" and "resent[ful]."

The ability to learn, develop hard and soft skills, and work toward a college degree while incarcerated helped combat such feelings. As Nelson remarked, "when you're incarcerated, they strip you of your dignity and let you know that…you're at the end of the totem pole. And this is where you are, and they keep you there…they kind of keep the foot on your head for a while and say, 'Hey, this is where you belong.'" Conversely, the BU program was not interested in stifling or subjugating participants, but instead was primarily concerned with helping students "reach [their] full potential." This effort to help students personally develop occurred in a number of ways. First and perhaps foremost for many participants, was through sheer exposure to college-level

curricula. The supportive environment created by faculty and program administrators encouraged either a new or renewed connection to learning. As Abby noted:

> There were a lot of things I had never heard of and didn't know about, so that was cool [she pauses]. Astronomy. That one, the Astronomy class blew my mind, like there were so many things, it was so—it was incredible. My greatest takeaway from all of the whole experience was there were so many things I didn't know. [Faculty] knew their stuff and were super passionate about it as well, and so it was impossible not to be moved by some of the things that were covered.

These types of learning experiences not only were described to be inaccessible elsewhere in prison, but for many participants, these were experiences with which they never had prior opportunities to engage, even before incarceration. As Felipe remarked: "I was never given the opportunity to take part in stuff like that, so me having the opportunity to take part in something bigger than the stuff back home was a great feeling."

The exposure to learning and encouragement to pursue personal interests often led to an enthusiasm for expanding one's own knowledge-base and world view. When asked to describe certain moments or experiences that were impactful, Pamela commented:

> Oh, my goodness, there was so many different moments and different professors that had such an impact on my spiritual and mental transformation. It was …incredible. It was like they were nurturing when they came in. They wanted to teach you and they wanted you to learn, and they saw that we were eager. But it was like nourishment, because my mind was craving something, and they were so happy to give it to me.

Pamela described that her renewed commitment to learning led her toward developing "hard skills" (like expertise in given subject areas), "soft skills" (like "social skills" and an ability to "network" with different types of people), and fostered within her a "sense of empowerment," "confidence," and "pride." She remarked:

> I started to care more about the way I talked, and I started to care more about the way I carried myself. So, I was learning [different] things and I was learning more about me. And so, by me investing in myself, it was me loving myself…I'm not gonna react the same way to somebody telling me, 'Oh you're no good, you're worthless,' because I know I'm worth more, because I worked really hard at being more and doing more.

For many participants—like Adrián—the opportunity to learn, develop, and succeed in a higher education program was perceived as validating, an opportunity that enabled him to escape from a type of personal imprisonment grounded in a negative self-conception:

> More than anything [in prison], there was this tension that was unresolved. I'm not one to take failure lightly or to shy away from a challenge. I couldn't get the chip off my shoulder, feeling like I was bested by I don't know…this thing called education or classroom testing. I just felt like I was bested. I felt like I had lost that fight. And I wanted to come back for round 2…[The ability to do that] was challenging, but also liberating and a lot of fun.

Theme 3: Noncoercive, Non-Prescriptive Practices of Self-Reflection and Inquiry

A final striking theme was the way in which participants described how the program fostered a deepened capacity for self-reflection and inquiry. Perhaps

unsurprisingly, some of the most popular course experiences for participants were within sociology classes. These findings are in alignment with prior scholarship relating to adult learners and incarcerated students, in which discussions on practical lived issues and experiences were found to be acutely impactful and relevant (Kallman, 2020; Knowles et al., 2020). Beyond sociology courses, participants described how a broad slate of college courses encouraged serious study of various subject matters—history, math and sciences, literature, and music, among others—which in combination led to deeper understandings of both the human condition and individual participants' self-conception, particularly in relation to their own social locations. As Jennifer remarked, "To make a human life in prison, that is the task."

Participants described that one of the most meaningful aspects of involvement in the program was the measure of autonomy and self-direction it offered. The prison was almost uniformly discussed as a highly "constrained" and "punitive" place, where participants were "looked down on" by prison staff and constantly made to "walk on egg shells." Even getting to class could be an ordeal, as Christine—a White woman in her early 30s—described. Christine was held at a minimum-security prison, and bussed to MCI-Framingham in order to take classes. Every time she entered the prison, she was put through a "degrading process" in which she was forced to "to take everything off in front of two people and bend over and cough." The primary emphasis inside prison was on ensuring that "every prisoner was made to follow orders," exposing participants to an often "demeaning" and "dehumanizing" process of treatment.

Because of the restrictive environment of the prison, many participants described that one of the most meaningful aspects of the program was the way in which faculty and

program administrators empowered students with an important degree of self-direction. As Nelson expressed:

> [The program] allowed you to expand yourself past…where you'd ever been before [prison] or while inside of the prison…It also made you feel as if you were being treated just like college students on the outside by being asked to [take part in learning], not just being dictated to, but actually included in the process of the education. So, it's not just somebody coming into a classroom saying, 'this is this, this is that,' They made sure that our input was also [treated as] worthy and valued.

This sense of not being strictly "dictated to," but instead encouraged to take active part in the learning process frequently fostered for participants a desire for self-reflection and personal inquiry. Many other types of programs at the prison would simply "tell you what to do" or stipulate "what conclusions to reach," but because the education received as part of the BU program was not perceived as being prescriptive or coercive in nature, participants felt liberated to draw their own conclusions and freely explore the details of their own lives.

This process of self-reflection and inquiry took shape in many different forms, often interrelating with participants' individual identities and life experiences. Adrián, for instance, was able to better understand that while growing up, he had been living inside what he described as an "identity trap": "I looked at myself as unlovable and unteachable, unchangeable in many ways." The exposure to educational opportunity, however, allowed him to break free from this trap, as he referenced his prior negative educational experiences described as part of theme 2:

> As a result of applying myself to education and writing papers, and doing the research that was required for any given subject, I just gained confidence. I realized I am much more than what I thought, and I indeed was an adult. I was a man, I was, I was a lot more than I had, than I, you know—I definitely wasn't AJ the baby, like I had felt before.

Adrián went on to explain that it was the experience of the program that allowed him to gain that hard won insight. He explained, "the system [of the prison] is meant to break you down…you're meant to feel like you're in trouble constantly, you're meant to fear." The BU program, however, allowed him to gain the tools necessary to take back a measure of control, to redirect his life:

> I'm rewriting the narrative right now, in the here and now. I can critically think through problems. Therefore, like when I find myself ready to act, say violently, and revert back to old behavior or to an addiction, or whatever it might be, I can problem-solve myself and critically think myself out of that space, and, in a sense, like rewrite my future—or at least my present, and consequently my future.

For some participants, like Hugh, the program had the effect of affirming the value of their individual identity. Hugh grew up gay in Somerville, Massachusetts in the 1980s, which he described as a town that was "very working class": "Most of the dads were drinking and selling drugs, you know, and all of that just kind of trickled down to all the kids." School never seemed a good fit for him, because Hugh felt a disconnect between his inner life and the life he was forced to present outwardly in school, at home, and in his neighborhood:

> I wasn't able to grasp [the importance of school] because I was so distracted by coming to terms with my sexuality. In the late 80s, you know, people were dying of AIDS, I was at a Catholic school, and I was petrified of my friends finding out. Add in that I ran away from home, and now I'm like, searching for love from my father who was like a mess of an alcoholic, and I was just lost. I was lost.

Hugh's experience in the BU program was wholly different. Faculty accepted Hugh on his own terms. This allowed Hugh to integrate his prior life experiences into his own self-conception: "It was, 'I am overcoming. I am moving beyond that life I found so hard to escape from.' It was like, I fucking figured it out. Finally." This renewed sense of self—found, in part, because of the educational opportunities afforded within the program—had a liberating effect: "[It was an] awakening of untapped potential, an awakening of opportunity…of possibility, of intellectual and academic development. It was an awakening of belonging in this community of higher education, and the acknowledgement that I, in fact, belonged there."

For Felipe, the experience of the program helped him come to terms with his own family environment growing up. Felipe described that his home life when younger had been "chaotic," in large part due to his father's drug addiction. He harbored what he labeled as an "unhealthy" resentment against his father into his adulthood. The BU program allowed him insight into his own upbringing in some surprising ways, as a science course (one only tangentially related to addiction) allowed him to process some of his father's experiences:

> I didn't know much about addiction as far as the science of addiction and what's going on and why people get addicted to drugs and what's happening in the brain

> and things like that. I didn't know. My father was a heroine user, a drug abuser who was never around, and I always blamed him. Like, 'he chose drugs over me' and you know, in [the BU program], like I educated myself on certain things and I came to terms, like even with my dad's stuff. I always held some resentment toward him and towards my family and it wasn't necessarily his decision. He was an addict and he did things to feed his addiction.

Felipe felt that the program did not prescriptively dictate how he should contextualize his life experiences, but rather it encouraged him to draw his "own insights" on "things I wasn't originally familiar with, stuff I didn't understand growing up, stuff that I struggled with myself." These insights were so important for Felipe that they have led him to working within the same community where he grew up as an addiction counselor post-release.

Similar to others, Pamela described how the cumulative effect of coursework within the program was that it better enabled her to think critically about dynamics within her own life, her family's life, and within her broader communities. She felt encouraged to ask and seek answers to her own questions:

> What were the patterns in my family's life? Why did my father go to prison? Why was my mother an addict? Why was all this abandonment happening in our family? And how was this cycle gonna stop? Did I want my children to experience these same patterns?

What Pamela valued most was not "being told" the answers to these questions, but instead being offered guidance "to gain the tools and space needed to try and answer questions for [her]self." Pamela's experiences mirrored those of other participants, who

found their involvement in the BU program particularly meaningful not only because of the relationships they developed and the opportunities they had to learn, but also because it helped unlock a capacity for independent self-reflection and inquiry that previously had been challenging to achieve.

Discussion

One of the primary current focuses within the field of higher education in prison is to ensure that polices helping to sustain programs—whether at the federal, state, or institution level—remain in place. Legislative history reveals the dramatic consequences when such policies are abandoned (SpearIt, 2016; Ubah, 2004). As prior policy research related to higher education in prison suggests, politicians may occasionally have to rely on some form of instrumental, recidivist arguments to ensure that policies take root, but it is important such framings do not undermine or diminish more foundational civic arguments (Conway, 2020; Harnish, 2019). The present study contributes to the end of identifying rich, student-centered justifications for college-level prison education that extend beyond such a purely recidivist lens.

The data gathered, of course, represent a particular time, place, program, and institutional culture. Implications should be drawn with caution, especially considering the wide array of geographic regions and program types that higher education in prison now comprises. While depth of insight was preferred for this study, breadth of experience is also important, and so future research following similar epistemic assumptions should be undertaken both in different parts of the country, but also within different types of college-level programs. Second Chance Pell supports community college programs, as well as online higher education, and so additional studies within these particular program

types would make for useful contributions to the field. The themes emerging from the current data are nonetheless important for policy makers, program administrators, and prison education faculty to bear in mind in determining not only how best to justify and defend programs, but also in considering the types of educational opportunities that are made available within carceral settings.

While breaking cycles of recidivism was unquestionably found to be important among participants in determining where they located value and meaning within the program, achieving a personal, cognitive sense of liberation was found to be equally important, and in many cases, transformative. While the environment of the prison itself frequently caused division, anger, and fear, the capacity to develop meaningful relationships grounded in mutual respect was described as being particularly relevant. Participants not only developed strong bonds with peers in the classroom, but also frequently took part in mentor/mentee relationships with faculty and program administrators. The interpersonal connections built within the program helped bridge common divides within the prison itself, often based on racial, ethnic, criminal history, and/or geographic backgrounds. Relationships with faculty and administrators also helped create a much-needed link to the outside world, helping to sustain a connection to life beyond the confines of prison.

As important as the development of interpersonal relationships was to participants, so too was the renewed commitment to learning and personal development that involvement in the program often sparked. Whether rightly or wrongly, participants often perceived themselves as having failed at school prior to incarceration, or conversely, having had school (or their communities) fail them. The prison itself

provided very little opportunity to enhance tangible skills, expand knowledge, or develop personally and/or intellectually. Many participants described themselves as eager for these types of opportunities, particularly as many viewed their lack of access to such prospects being a major component contributing to the dynamics that led to their incarceration in the first place. The newfound opportunity to develop hard and soft skills, explore topics of personal interest, and receive guided mentorship from faculty with expertise was often perceived as a means for cognitively escaping the restrictive environment of the prison, empowering participants to gain some of the tools for intellectual inquiry and personal development that they seldom received prior to incarceration.

Finally, the program also clearly helped foster for participants a deeper capacity for self-reflection, both in terms of personal decision making and accountability, but also in relation to better understanding social contexts inside and outside prison that impact individuals and communities. Participants described that most experiences in prison are either highly prescriptive or coercive in nature. It was important for participants to be involved in a program where they maintained a crucial measure of self-direction in their learning. Exposure to a broad array of learning opportunities encouraged self-reflection and inquiry, but any conclusions or personal insights drawn were neither prescribed nor obligatory. The encouragement of independent and critical thinking skills facilitated reflective practices without mandating them, without coercing yet another form of compliance.

Conclusion

In considering the totality of interviews, Jennifer's remark stands out as particularly telling: "To make a human life in prison, that is the task." While the work of "feeling" or "becoming" more human is difficult—perhaps even impossible—to quantify, it is nonetheless a felt experience, one that very clearly shines through in many of the interviews with formerly incarcerated students. It is only through the process of listening to students (and former students) themselves that such voices, perspectives, and experiences are given pride of place. While reduced recidivism may indeed be a welcomed byproduct of college-level prison education, it is limited in its capacity as a justification for such programming. A purely instrumental approach does not fully capture—and, in fact, might obscure—more foundational civic principles related to the recognition of human dignity and the provision of educational access and opportunity.

There are certain unambiguous benefits to striking a balance between a vocational and more holistic approach to curricula, as well as in providing online learning opportunities in carceral settings, but policy makers, as well as program administrators and faculty, should be keenly aware of the types of experiences valued by participants in this study. In the face of disheartening personal and interpersonal dynamics in prison, it is vital that higher education programs remain deliberate in providing spaces which foster mutual respect and mentorship, which offer opportunities to develop skills and explore personal interests, and which promote self-reflection and inquiry in a non-prescriptive, noncoercive manner. Doing so can help combat some of the most dynamics inside carceral settings, helping to provide a more humane response to mass incarceration.

CHAPTER THREE: TALKING PAST EACH OTHER: THE DEBATE OVER COLLEGE-LEVEL PRISON EDUCATION AS REPRESENTED IN NEW YORK PRINT MEDIA, 2013-2020

Abstract

The debate over higher education in prison serves as a prime example of a contentious socio-political issue that frequently divides public sentiment. News media establishes a public record of how such issues are debated and discussed. This study examines how the debate over higher education in prison is represented in the media, providing a thematic content analysis of 243 articles printed in six New York-based newspapers from February 2013 to January 2020. Grounded in New York, a state on the forefront of higher education in prison policy, the time frame covers a full year prior to Governor Cuomo's failed 2014 attempt to develop a statewide higher education in prison initiative, to four full years after the success of his 2016 Right Priorities plan. The federal 2016 Second Chance Pell Program was also implemented during this time, allowing for analysis of both federal and state policy debates within the media. The study finds that the media employs framing mechanisms that largely ignore or obscure salient civic arguments, instead favoring instrumental framings related almost exclusively to recidivism and taxpayer savings. These findings are discussed within the broader context of how media coverage tends to oversimplify social policy issues of crime and justice.

Introduction

The involvement of colleges and universities in providing higher education in prison has been widely debated since the Federal Pell Grant was first extended to incarcerated students in 1972 (Ubah, 2004). Perhaps a sign of the contentiousness of the debate, support from the federal government for college in prison has only been intermittent. “Tough-on-crime” political pressure during the early 1990s led to the passing of the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill, which effectively ended access to Pell Grants in prison for the next two decades (Gould and SpearIt, 2014). Only recently, with the enactment of the 2016 Second Chance Pell Program, as well as the 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill which includes funding for the full restoration of Pell Grants for incarcerated students, has the federal government again provided support for such programs (Burke, 2021). With the new federal legislation set to be implemented in 2023, the debate over college-level prison education remains a controversial topic, one with very real consequences. Such initiatives represent the primary funding mechanism by which incarcerated students access higher education opportunities. Without them, programs themselves would struggle to survive.

In aiming to better understand how such debates are (re)presented to the public, extensive scholarship has examined how matters of criminal justice are portrayed in the media (e.g., Baranauskas & Drakulich, 2018; Burkhardt, 2014; Gruenewald & Hipple, 2021). Montes et al. (2020) describe a common finding, noting a tendency within media to “frequently oversimplify dimensions that may bear on discussions about policies aimed at crime, criminal justice, and corrections” (p. 1243). And yet, news media continues to play in important role for the public, both shaping and reflecting public

opinion on important social issues (Surette, 2015). Such dynamics lead to important questions regarding the provision of higher education opportunities in prison. The research questions undergirding this study are as follows: 1.) *How is the debate over higher education in prison represented in the media?* 2.) *Does the media have a tendency to oversimplify the debate?* 3.) *If so, which framings of the debate are commonly invoked, and, alternatively, which framings remain either obscured or ignored?*

This study aims to examine the contours of public discourse relating to the debate over higher education in prison as represented in mainstream newspaper outlets. Identifying the various gradients of support and opposition to such policies enables an analysis of the extent to which media representations either align, or are in conflict with, current theoretical and empirical understandings of the need for higher education in prison. Grounded in the context of New York, a state at the forefront of college-in-prison policy initiatives (Conway, 2020; Jacobs & Weissman, 2019), this study presents findings from a thematic content analysis of 243 articles printed in six New York-based newspapers from 2013 to 2020.

This study helps advance research on how a progressive social policy issue—namely the provision of higher education opportunities in prison—is represented in the media. In what follows, I first discuss research on media coverage of policy debates surrounding matters of criminal justice. I also discuss the prison education policy context within New York, as well as provide a review of scholarship advocating for such policies. This discussion helps form the basis for the conceptual framework and methodological design geared toward measuring how the debate is represented in the media. After presenting findings, I discuss their implications, ultimately contending that the media

employs framing mechanisms that largely either obscure or ignore the most salient civic and moral arguments in support of higher education in prison, instead favoring an almost exclusively instrumental lens. The study not only provides insight into better understanding how the debate over higher education in prison is represented to the public, but also serves as an in-depth and incisive example of how current contentious socio-political issues are framed within traditional media.

Literature Review

Media Coverage of Crime and Justice

American newspapers have a long and uneven history, at certain points booming in industry, at others on the seeming brink of collapse (Schudson & Tifft, 2005). The newspaper industry has experienced a massive decline in recent years. According to the Pew Research Center, nearly half of U.S. newspaper jobs have disappeared since 2008 (Grieco, 2020). And yet, for however perilous the situation is inside American newsrooms, newspapers continue to play a vital role in providing the public information on social and political developments. While newspaper circulation is declining, digital subscriptions are substantially increasing (as much as 17 percent year-over-year) (Barthel, 2019). As Burkhardt (2014) observes, newspapers remain particularly useful in assessing public discourse in that they serve as "processors of information who both reflect and contribute to the culture surrounding an issue" (p. 284).

News stories relating to matters of criminal justice rank second behind weather in terms of popular interest among U.S. adults (Pew Research Center, 2019). The public continues to rely on news media as one of their main sources of information on issues of crime (Fields & Newman, 2020; Surette, 2015). And, yet, despite their popularity, a

troubling trend exists in which news stories on crime and justice frequently suffer from the distortion and misrepresentation of facts (Jewkes, 2015). Crime news coverage often fails to offer substantive policy-related information, and when it does, it frequently oversimplifies complexities at the heart of contentious political debate, offering instead an easier to digest version of policy arguments (Dixon & Williams, 2014).

Several potential causes help explain these worrying trends, including reporters working under deadlines with strict word count limits, lack of specific policy-related expertise within newsrooms, and the impact of profitmaking objectives and ideological biases (Jewkes, 2015; Sutter, 2012). The lack of reliability within news coverage, however, does not imply that such coverage has little impact on public sentiment relating to policy issues. In fact, it is quite the opposite. As Yettick (2015) observes, "Although researchers disagree about issues of mechanism and degree, a large body of literature suggests that the news media can and do influence decision making, perception, and even behavior" (p. 173). The particular ways in which policy debates are covered within the media, even if often representing distortions or oversimplifications, are important to uncover in relation to how they impact public perception and the terms by which policy disputes are discussed and understood.

New York's Prison Education Policy Context

New York has been a leader in college-in-prison policy at the state-level (Conway, 2020). While federal backing in the form of Pell Grants is a major boon, a more comprehensive level of support for higher education in prison will continue to require state level buy-in. New York's Right Priorities plan provides a prime example of what states can do to support college-in-prison. The initiative is detailed and thorough,

with an established goal of enrolling 500 new incarcerated students in higher education programs every year over a five-year period (State of New York, 2016). Seven colleges and universities, including institutions ranging from the Ivy League to community colleges, were selected to share $15 million in funding to develop and/or sustain programs (Ramey, 2016). Altogether, the initiative will support programs in 17 correctional facilities across different geographic regions of the state (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017).

Right Priorities has predictably been met with resistance. In fact, Cuomo's 2016 proposal is the second iteration of the initiative; a similar 2014 proposal failed after widespread Republican criticism (Benjamin, 2014). Most Democrats who supported the 2014 initiative did so on the basis of its purported fiscal benefits. Republicans, however, condemned the initiative. Online petitions to ban the initiative were disseminated, scathing press releases were delivered, and web-videos circulated depicting incensed college students questioning why "cons and criminals" were receiving free education while "upstanding" citizens were forced to pay expensive tuitions (Benjamin, 2014). In response, the initiative's 2016 iteration made a few significant changes, linking funding for the plan to asset forfeitures and private donations (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). Many Republicans continued to fight the revised proposal, claiming it sent the wrong message to law-abiding students "who work incredibly hard to pay for college," but the plan garnered enough support for ratification and has now been running for the past four years (Molongoski, 2017).

Current Scholarship Advocating for Higher Education in Prison

The case against college-in-prison is relatively straightforward. Rep. Chris Collins (R-NY) demonstrates the typical line of criticism in arguing against both Second Chance Pell and Right Priorities. Collins claims such programs "reward undeserving lawbreakers" by offering free education to "criminals" at a time when "law-abiding" students are burdened by outrageous debts (McCarthy, 2016). Such an argument not only positions the issue in economic terms, claiming it costs taxpayers, but also in moral terms, suggesting it is unfair to offer free education to "lawbreakers" while upstanding students remain on the hook for high tuitions.

The case advocating for such programs is more complicated. Most research into college-level prison education centers around analyzing effects on recidivism (e.g., Davis et al., 2013; Kim & Clark, 2013; Pompoco et al., 2017). The influential 2013 RAND study was massive in scale, finding that participants in prison education had 43 percent lower odds of recidivating. The study posited that for every dollar spent, taxpayers save $5 on reincarceration expenditures (Davis et al., 2013). In press releases, the US Department of Education (2016, 2020) directly cites the RAND study, positioning reduced recidivism as the main objective of Second Chance Pell. Similarly, Right Priorities declares that the "program will significantly increase the likelihood of successful reentry into the community thereby reducing recidivism" (Manhattan District Attorney's Office, 2017). The plan directs constituents to the RAND study and claims it will "save taxpayer dollars in the long run" (State of New York, 2016).

And, yet, while findings from the RAND study are often celebrated, many within the prison education community have begun arguing for justification through other

means. Prison educators often build their defense of programs not on recidivism, but rather on the grounds that prison education is both an equity concern, and a moral and ethical responsibility (Castro, 2018; Harnish, 2019). Such moral framings of the debate often criticize purely recidivist justifications. Rather than merely positioning programs as a means for achieving reduced recidivism, these arguments often rely on a recognition of racial and wealth inequities at the heart of mass incarceration (Castro, 2018; Conway, 2020). They also caution against purely vocational approaches to prison education, instead focusing on more humanistic pedagogies and curricula (Castro & Brawn, 2017; McCorkel & DeFina, 2019).

A schism thus exists between advocates who predominantly justify programs through recidivism, and those who rely on moralistic framings. Given Yettick's (2015) contention that media coverage influences policy decision making (as well as public perception and behavior), it is important to better understand the prevalence with which these framings appear—or fail to appear—within news stories. If Montes et al. (2020) are correct in claiming that media coverage frequently oversimplifies debates and ignores nuance, it is crucial to explore how such patterns may impact the debate over higher education in prison. The specific ways in which programs and policies are defended not only is likely to impact their long-term prospects for survival, but also may bear on the types of educational opportunities made available inside prisons.

Conceptual Framework

This study builds on scholarship demonstrating the media's propensity to oversimplify nuanced complexities at the heart of criminal justice policy debates. It is guided by Burkhardt's (2014) conceptual model employed in examining newspaper

coverage of the debate over prison privatization. Burkhardt's analysis explores processes of "diversionary reframing," in which attention to one "frame," or central organizing idea, often obscures or deflects attention away from other potential framing mechanisms (p. 280). Burkhardt asserts that there exist "a finite set of frames that resonate with the public," and therefore the prioritization of certain arguments and ideas over others greatly impacts how policy debates are received and understood (p. 281).

Burkhardt divides frames by whether they invoke either an instrumental or moral framing mechanism. An instrumental frame relies on an input-output model (an example within the debate over higher education in prison would be that the *input* of providing education may produce the tangible *output* of reduced recidivism, or, similarly, an *output* of employable skills). A moral framing, however, does not invoke a clearly defined tangible output, but instead is built on civic principles and/or moral foundations (for instance, the argument that education should be a human right regardless of incarceration status). Newspaper coverage of higher education in prison policies—particularly in a state like New York, where multiple iterations of policy proposals have been put forth—establishes a type of public record on the matter, affording an opportunity to analyze how the issue has been understood, debated, and discussed over a given time frame. If only "a finite set of frames" resonates with the public, it is important to understand which ones receive prioritization over others, as these framings are likely to impact both public opinion and policy decision making.

Given what scholarship reveals in terms of the media's tendency to oversimply policy debates relating to crime and justice, it is reasonable to expect the same will hold true within the debate over college-in-prison. Certain frames relating to program costs,

taxpayer savings, and reduced recidivism are likely to be prioritized over questions regarding whether or not programs are in fact morally justifiable. The findings of this study, therefore, are particularly relevant, especially for advocates of progressive social policy initiatives. The *ends* of increasing educational opportunities in prison may seem morally just, yet the *means* of justifying programs through reduced recidivism and taxpayer savings are nonetheless a tactic of diversionary reframing. While it may be politically expedient to defend initiatives on the grounds of reduced recidivism, it is important to understand the extent to which such justifications might obscure more salient arguments, ones that are much more explicitly tied to foundational civic principles.

Data and Methods

This study presents findings from a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018) of 243 articles printed in six New York-based newspapers from February 1, 2013 to January 31, 2020. It is grounded in New York, a state on the forefront of college-in-prison policy. The time frame was selected to cover a full year prior to Governor Andrew Cuomo's failed 2014 attempt to develop a statewide policy for higher education in prison, to four full years after the success of his 2016 Right Priorities plan. During this time frame, the 2016 Second Chance Pell Program was also implemented, allowing for analysis of media coverage of both federal and state policy debates.

To identify a listing of newspapers, I consulted and cross-referenced the New York Public Library Archive with the official website of the State of New York. From these sources, I identified 121 newspapers in active circulation from 2013 to 2020. Of these, I selected a cross-section of newspapers informed by Khoshravinik's (2010)

recommendation of sampling outlets to include diversity among a variety of factors: circulation size, regional focus (in the case of New York: "upstate," "downstate," and/or a national focus), political ideologies undergirding outlets, as well as the likely amount of coverage related to governmental policies and proceedings. In the case of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, these outlets have been subject to prior content analyses examining their political dispositions, and thus warranted mutual inclusion to maximize the presence of potentially distinct framings (Eisinger et al., 2007). While no perfect sample exists, achieving a diversity of outlets was important to ensure that findings are not specific to any one particular source. A final sample of six newspapers was selected: the (Albany) *Times Union*, *Buffalo News*, *The New York Post, The New York Times*, *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle,* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

For each outlet, I conducted keyword searches to curate a database of all extant articles focused on college-level prison education. Keyword searches included: "prison education;" "Right Priorities + Cuomo;" "postsecondary prison education;" and "Second Chance Pell," among others. I used both Nexis Uni, as well as each newspaper's online search engine available with subscription. To further delimit the sample, I opted to include only results found in the main text of articles. I excluded results generated from text found in digital commentaries submitted by readers on online articles. The rationale for this was guided by methodological considerations necessary to ensure the trustworthiness of comments within online newspapers (Weber, 2013).

Analytic Strategy

I first read the totality of newspaper articles and coded them using NVivo Plus v.13 (for PC). Each article was saved as a unique .pdf and tagged with accompanying

metadata, including year of publication, newspaper outlet, author's last name, and the type of article. For article type, I included five categories: opinion pieces, human interest stories, legislative updates, program updates, and ancillary references to prison education as part of broader news stories. For the subset of articles that were opinion pieces, I included the type of speaker (civilian, editorial board, letter to the editor, organization, and reporter). This decision is consistent with recent empirical examinations of how an individual's positionality mediates the framing they invoke when discussing issues related to resource allocation in prisons (Page, 2011).

Adopting Burkhardt's (2014) schema, I devised a quadrant of *a priori* nested codes to use for coding articles. I coded references—or "frames"—within articles by whether they demonstrated support or opposition to the provision of higher education in prison, as well as whether they invoked an instrumental or moral framing. The development of the codebook emerged from an iterative process, as is common with codebooks for other types of data collection (Campbell et al., 2013). Initial codes were formed by drawing on literatures relating to the debate over college-in-prison, taking into consideration dimensions commonly described as relevant to the debate. These codes were then placed into the quadrant coding framework. The initial codebook included definitions and descriptions of items to be coded. A fellow researcher was consulted to ensure any ambiguous definitions or descriptions were explained and clarified. Finally, I coded a subset of 20 articles, asking the above-mentioned researcher to independently do the same (Neuman, 2014). Instances of disagreement were used as opportunities to further clarify codes in order to ensure consistency in establishing the finalized codebook.

Figure 2 depicts the finalized codes placed into the appropriate quadrants of the coding framework.

	In Favor of Higher Education in Prison	**Against Higher Education in Prison**
Instrumental Framing	• Benefit at Personal Level • Benefit at Skills Level • Helps Integrate People Back into Society • Improves Public Safety • Lowers Recidivism • Saves Taxpayers Money	• Burden on Taxpayers • Makes Prison Too Enjoyable / Not Punitive Enough
Moral Framing	• Calling on Civic Principles • Response to Class and/or Wealth Dynamics of Incarceration • Response to Racialized Dynamics of Incarceration • Unspecified Moral Claim	• Prisoners as Undeserving of Higher Education • Unfair to Law-Abiding Citizens

Figure 2: Finalized Codes Nested Within Coding Framework

Beyond the frames listed above, three neutral frames were included that indicated neither support nor opposition to higher education in prison. Appendix D provides further clarification on each specific frame, as well as offers illustrative examples. Following the coding strategy employed by Montes et al. (2020), an additional layer of coding was added to each reference denoting whether such arguments for and against prison education were made either explicitly or implicitly. This decision was informed by research suggesting a tendency within media coverage to avoid explicit, nuanced discussions of socio-political issues relating to race and class and/or poverty, often times because journalists are simply not conscious of the ways race and class might impact their work (Bowman, 2018; Kim et al., 2010; Lundman, 2003). Doing so not only allows

to capture the prevalence with which certain "frames" appear, but also whether these frames are explicitly tied to cogent arguments, or merely offered as implicit indications of support or opposition. As a clarifying example, a reference within an article to racial disparities in incarceration rates would be coded as an implicit justification for programs, whereas a reference overtly connecting those disparities to a defense of higher education in prison would be coded as an explicit justification.

By following the parameters of this analytic strategy, findings within this study not only identify the prevalence with which specific frames appear, but also offer an understanding of whether such frames are typically invoked explicitly or implicitly. Such analysis demonstrates which framings resonate most clearly within media coverage, and, alternatively, which ones are either ignored or obscured. Drawing on relevant literature to create the nested codes also enables analysis of the extent to which media representations of the debate align with current scholarship regarding the purpose and value of higher education in prison.

Findings

In total, the sampling strategy yielded 243 unique articles. Table 1 includes an overview of all articles included across each outlet, further identifying by article type. Article types fit broadly into five categories: (1) ancillary (articles in which college-in-prison was merely mentioned but not the focus), (2) human interest story (articles focusing on an individual student or faculty member), (3) legislative update (articles providing information on Second Chance Pell and/or Right Priorities legislation), (4) opinion pieces, and (5) program updates (articles offering information on individual programs).

Table 1: Overview of Articles by News Outlet

Outlet	Ancillary	Human Interest	Legislative Update	Opinion Piece[a]	Program Update	Total Art.
(Albany) Times Union	8	4	22	34	12	80
Buffalo News	6	2	7	21	0	36
New York Post	7	2	4	6	1	20
New York Times	11	5	4	23	3	46
Rochester D & C	0	0	13	18	1	32
Wall Street Journal	8	1	12	2	6	29
Total	40	14	62	104	23	243

[a] Opinion pieces are further categorized by author type: Civilian, Editorial Board, Letters to the Editor, Organization, and Reporter.

Two hundred forty-three unique articles were identified referencing higher education in prison between February 1, 2013 and January 31, 2020. The highest number of articles (*n*=80) was found in the (Albany) *Times Union*, perhaps unsurprising considering Albany's status as state capital and the location where state-level legislative debates and voting occur. All other outlets ranged from between 20 articles (*The New York Post*) to 46 articles (*The New York Times*) over the given time frame.

Opinion pieces comprised the largest number of articles by type (*n*=104), demonstrating the contentiousness of the debate. Table 2 displays the breakdown of opinion pieces by author type. Classification of authorship broke down into five categories: (1) civilian (an individual authoring an op-ed), (2) editorial board op-ed, (3) letters to the editor, (4) op-eds attributed to organizations, and (5) op-eds written by specific reporters at given newspapers.

Table 2: Overview of Opinion Articles by Author Type

Outlet	Civilian	Editorial Board	Letters to the Editor	Organization	Reporter	Total Art.
(Albany) *Times Union*	11	7	13	1	2	34
Buffalo News	3	1	16	0	1	21
New York Post	2	3	0	0	1	6
New York Times	3	8	11	0	1	23
Rochester D & C	4	2	6	0	6	18
Wall Street Journal	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total	24	21	47	1	11	104

The findings not only demonstrate engagement within the public, but also from each outlet's editorial board (excepting *The Wall Street Journal*), with letters to the editor (*n*=47), civilian op-eds (*n*=24), and editorial board op-eds (*n*=21) comprising the three largest respective shares of opinion pieces.

Following the coding quadrant of *a priori* nested codes, I tracked individual "frames" by whether they invoked an instrumental or moral framing of the debate, as well as whether they were either in support, against, or neutral to the provision of higher education in prison. Table 3 provides an overview by both the number of total articles employing such framing, as well as by the total number of references within articles.

Table 3: Instrumental Framing v. Moral Framing by Articles and References

Sentiment	Instrumental Framing		Moral Framing		Total	
	Articles	Ref.	Articles	Ref.	Articles	Ref.
Support for Higher Education in Prison	174	1,076	70	145	175	1,221
Against Higher Education in Prison	94	181	128	416	132	597
Neutral or No Clear Sentiment Expressed	17	25	3	3	20	28
Total	**204**	**1,282**	**162**	**564**	**211/243**	**1,846**

Out of the 243 total articles, 211 (87%) invoked at least a single framing of the debate, with 1,846 total references included. Of these, 204 articles (97%) comprising 1,282 references (69% of total references) employed an instrumental framing of the debate, while 162 articles (77%) comprised of 564 references (31%) employed a moral framing. The vast majority of instrumental frames were employed in support of higher education in prison (*n*=1,076, within 174 articles), while only 181 references over 94 articles employed an instrumental framing in opposition. Within moral framings, the opposite trend emerged. Only 145 references within 70 articles employed a moral framing in support of prison education, while 416 references within 128 articles did so in opposition. Instances of an instrumental or morally neutral framing of the debate (discussed in more detail later in this presentation of findings) were relatively rare, with only 17 articles comprised of 25 references and 3 articles comprised of 3 references invoked, respectively.

Many articles included both instrumental and moral framings, as well as framings referencing both support and opposition. Often, frames against higher education in prison

simultaneously invoked both an instrumental and moral lens. For example, a 2014 legislative update appearing in *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle* quotes Republican State Senator Greg Ball, explaining his dissatisfaction with Governor Cuomo's proposal: "In a world of finite resources, where we are struggling to find funding for education for our kids, the last thing New York state should be funding is college tuition for convicts" (Spector, 2014). Ball's statement invokes both an instrumental frame, citing how the initiative represents a burden to taxpayers, but also frames it in moral terms by describing how expenditures in support of "convicts" is unfair to "our kids."

Invoking both an instrumental and moral framing of the debate occurred in support of programs as well, although less frequently. For example, in a 2017 *Times Union* op-ed, Jim Farrin, Director of the Petey Greene Program (a non-profit providing tutoring services in prison), comments: "Cuomo has done the right thing…we will achieve more for incarcerated people—and society in the form of even more deeply-reduced reoffending—when we view education not only for its utility but also its affirmation of humanity." Farrin invokes an instrumental framing by referencing effects on "reduced reoffending," but also highlights a moral benefit by commenting on how programs can provide a needed "affirmation of humanity" in prison.

It should be noted that frames were also tracked by outlet and year (see Appendices E and F for further detail), but no major trends emerged in these respects. It is worth observing that certain outlets, such as *The New York Times*, skewed slightly more favorable in their coverage, whereas others, such as *Buffalo News*, tended to be more critical. This was true whether or not these outlets were invoking instrumental or moral framings of the debate. 2014 was by far the most active year in terms of coverage,

with just over half (52%) of total articles appearing in that year alone. This is perhaps unsurprising, given the contentious nature of the debate in 2014 over the proposal to use taxpayer money to fund programs. Trends within coverage in 2014, however, remained broadly similar to other years.

In order to achieve specificity in terms of the arguments invoked, the individual nested codes were identified within each article and tracked. Table 4 reveals the prevalence with which each individual frame was referenced.

Table 4: Instrumental and Moral Frames by Articles and References

	Articles	**References**
Total	243	1,846
Articles with Any Framing	211	1,846
Instrumental Frame	204 (97%)	1,282 (69%)
Support for Higher Education in Prison	174	1,076
Benefit at Personal Level	96	244
Benefit at Skills Level	72	95
Helps Integrate People Back into Society	55	83
Improves Public Safety	66	102
Lowers Recidivism	150	322
Saves Taxpayers Money	111	230
Against Higher Education in Prison	94	181
Burden on Taxpayers	92	172
Makes Prison Too Enjoyable	8	9
Neutral or No Clear Sentiment	17	25

Questioning Methods of Recidivism Studies	11	15
Questioning Methods of Taxpayer Savings Studies	8	10
Moral Frame	162 (77%)	564 (31%)
Support for Higher Education in Prison	70	145
Calling on Civic Principles	35	54
Response to Class / Wealth Dynamics of Incarceration	28	39
Response to Racialized Dynamics of Incarceration	19	28
Unspecified Moral Claim	21	24
Against Higher Education in Prison	128	416
Prisoners as Undeserving of Higher Education	108	216
Unfair to Law-Abiding Citizens	103	200
Neutral or No Clear Sentiment	3	3
Questioning Whether Prisoners are Deserving	3	3

The instrumental frame in support of higher education in prison alluding to reduced recidivism was by far the most commonly invoked frame. It appeared in 150 of the 211 coded articles (71%), often appearing several times within each, as 322 total references were included within the subset. Many of the instances occurred as the sole framing of the debate offered in support of programs. However, it was also frequently coupled with the additional instrumental frame of saving taxpayer money, which appeared in its own right within 111 articles with 230 references. For example, the author of a 2015

legislative update appearing in the *Buffalo News* summarizes her argument by referencing the benefits of reduced recidivism on taxpayer savings:

> Supporters point to a 2013 study by the nonprofit RAND Corp., which concluded that prisoners who participated in education programs were 43 percent less likely to return to prison…and also found that every dollar spent on inmate education translated to $4-to-$5 saved on re-incarceration. (Long, 2015)

Additionally, the instrumental frame of incarcerated students benefiting at a personal level was also very popular, appearing in 96 articles with 244 references.

The only instrumental frame in opposition to higher education in prison occurring with serious frequency involved the argument that programs represent a burden to taxpayers, appearing in 92 articles with 172 references. There were, however, two recurrent moral framings against higher education in prison. The frame presenting "prisoners" or "criminals" as undeserving of higher education appeared in 108 articles with 216 references, and the frame of programs being unfair to "law-abiding citizens" appeared in 103 articles with 200 references. Moral frames in support of higher education in prison, on the other hand, were invoked comparatively little. The frame of calling on civic principles was most popular within the group, appearing in 35 articles with 54 total references.

As defined in Appendix D, the frame of calling on civic principles to support higher education in prison could either be secular or religious in nature. For example, a 2016 letter to the editor appearing in *The New York Times*, grounds the argument in secular human rights: *"*It is high time to end our country's failed 'tough on crime' policies, which have denied those in prison and transitioning out of prison this basic

human right [referring to higher education], and have created cycles of incarceration lasting decades" (Martin, 2016). A 2019 op-ed written by the Editorial Board of the *Times Union* makes a similar argument, but places it in religious terms:

> The world's major religions instruct believers to care for prisoners—such as the New Testament passage in which the apostle Paul exhorts, 'Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.'

There were also three frames, both instrumental and moral, that were neutral in their framing of the debate. The most common neutral framings were related to questioning the findings, methodology, or relevancy of studies measuring the effects of programs on recidivism and/or taxpayer savings. The former appeared in 11 articles with 15 total references, the latter in 8 articles with 10 references. There were also 3 articles with references that questioned whether incarcerated students were deserving of higher education without clearly indicating an answer.

Following the coding strategy of Montes et al. (2020), I also tracked whether specific frames were invoked explicitly or implicitly. Such a strategy responded to scholarship suggesting that news coverage tends to avoid explicit, nuanced discussions of matters relating to race and either class, wealth, and/or poverty (Bowman, 2018; Kim et al., 2010). Table 5 displays the prevalence with which specific frames were invoked explicitly or implicitly.

Table 5: Specific Frames by How Often They Were Invoked Explicitly vs. Implicitly

	Articles Explicitly Evoking Frame	Refs.	Articles Implicitly Evoking Frame	Refs.	Total Articles Evoking Frame	Total Refs.
Instrumental						
Support						
Lowers Recidivism	122	227	63	95	150	322
Saves Tax Money	97	174	39	56	111	230
Opposition						
Burden on Taxpayers	63	111	43	61	92	172
Moral						
Support						
Calling on Civic Principles	27	42	10	12	35	54
Response to Class/Wealth	10	12	21	27	28	39
Response to Racial Dynamics	7	8	14	20	19	28
Opposition						
Prisoners as Undeserving	85	159	42	57	108	216
Unfair to Law-Abiding Citizens	81	155	34	45	103	200

Framing support for higher education in prison as a response to class and/or wealth dynamics of incarceration was only invoked explicitly in 10 articles with 12 references, whereas it was invoked implicitly in 21 articles with 27 references. Appearing even less often was the frame of support for programs as a response to the racialized dynamics of incarceration, appearing explicitly in 7 articles with 8 references and implicitly in 14 articles with 20 references. This was in direct contrast to what was present within many of the other most popular frames, which all were invoked more often explicitly than implicitly, and often by a rather large degree.

These findings align with scholarship demonstrating a reticence within the media to explicitly discuss issues of race, class, and poverty. When invoked, these frames were

typically invoked implicitly. For example, a 2016 legislative update in *The Wall Street Journal* relies on an implicit framing in support of prison education as a response to the racialized dynamics of incarceration, citing that, "as of 2014, the state's prison system had 53,565 inmates, 73.4% of whom were African-American or Hispanic" (Ramey, 2016). The implication is that programs can help combat or counterbalance the ill-effects of such trends, but it does not explicitly lay out how or why they would be effective at doing so.

In contrast, a 2018 editorial in *The New York Times* makes explicit how programs can serve as a response to the racialized dynamics of incarceration. After citing similar data to those above, the author explicitly defines the implications: "College presidents across the country emphasize the importance of 'diversity, inclusion and belonging,' and they are reckoning with their institutions' ties to slavery. Expanding prison education programs would link those two ventures in a forward-thinking way" (Hinton, 2018). Rather than merely citing statistics without expounding further, the author offers a generative way to connect educational access in prison with broader issues of educational justice.

Discussion

Talking Past Each Other: Advocates and Critics Relying on Widely Divergent Framings

One of the more striking trends within the data is the divide in how the debate over higher education in prison is waged. As Table 3 reveals, support for policies and programs relies heavily on an instrumental approach. In relation to expressed support for higher education in prison, the number of articles invoking an instrumental framing was

nearly 2.5-to-1 compared to those employing a moral framing (174 articles to 70, respectively). Furthermore, the number of references containing instrumental framings occurred over 7 times as frequently as those containing moral framings (1,076 references to 145, respectively). Opposition to higher education in prison, however, included very different tendencies. Criticisms frequently employed both instrumental and moral framings, with 70% of references (416 out of a total of 597 references against higher education in prison) invoking a moral framing. This indicates a major divide between the media's representation of support and opposition to programs, with support conveyed predominantly through an instrumental lens, and opposition communicated most often through a moral lens.

Reliance on instrumental frameworks to indicate support for higher education in prison is perhaps unsurprising given that both the US Department of Education (2016, 2020) and the state of New York (2016) justify their policies by referencing instrumental goals, namely effects on recidivism and taxpayer savings. As Table 4 shows, these were the two most common frames within the data. However, the types of moral arguments—such as those made by prison educators and advocates in the literature review of this study—rarely appeared. Moral framings only comprised 12% of total references in support of higher education in prison (145 out of 1,221 total references expressing support).

With opponents of higher education in prison often using *both* an instrumental and moral framework (leaning more toward the moral), and advocates relying heavily on an instrumental framing, many of the arguments expressed within the media seem to be talking past each other. This trend may relate to the news media's tendency to

oversimplify complexities and nuance at the heart of contentious political issues (Dixon & Williams, 2014), but the end result is that moral and civic arguments in support of higher education in prison are not being clearly mobilized within news coverage.

Straightforward Criticism of Higher Education in Prison

While criticisms of higher education in prison frequently relied on both instrumental and moral framings of the debate, that is not to suggest that such messaging was overly complicated or confused. In fact, arguments against higher education in prison as expressed within news coverage were relatively simple and direct. Only four unique framings against higher education in prison were identified, and of these, only three were widely invoked: the instrumental frame of programs as a taxpayer burden, and the moral frames of "criminals" as undeserving of higher education and programs as unfair to law-abiding citizens.

Furthermore, these three framings were frequently employed together, the instrumental frame of it being a burden on taxpayers often appearing part and parcel of broader moral claims. As Tables 3 and 4 show, there were 132 total articles with frames expressing opposition to higher education in prison. Of these, 108 contained references to prisoners as undeserving, 103 to such programs being unfair to law-abiding citizens, and 92 to the burden programs place on taxpayers, suggesting the high amount of overlap between these three distinct framings. References that included all three frames were common. Many of these were expressed in measured terms. For example, as quoted within a 2014 legislative update appearing in *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, Democratic State Senator Ted O'Brien voiced his opposition to the initiative:

> ‘We should not spend taxpayer money on funding college classes for inmates when rising tuition rates are preventing so many hardworking young people who have done nothing wrong from going to college.…However well-intentioned, I cannot support a policy that would divert resources away from helping students in good standing and their families afford a quality education.’ (Campbell, 2014)

O’Brien describes his perspective in a considered manner, claiming that Governor Cuomo’s plan not only poses a burden to taxpayers, but also helps fund the education of those who have “done wrong” at the expense of students and families in “good standing.”

There were also several instances, however, in which these same three frames were invoked in a more highly charged emotional fashion, such as within an editorial also appearing in *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle* in 2014. The author, positioning himself as “a parent of two college students,” whose “blood boiled” when he saw Governor Cuomo’s proposal, offers the following invective:

> Can you really provide a college education for $5,000 a year without a facility, faculty or resources in place in our ‘overcrowded system’? If so, why can’t you do this in our already established state schools for the paying students? Is it really fair to ask a law-abiding youth (or maybe a victim) to take on 15 years of debt, while the murderer, pedophile, rapist, drug dealer or thug gets theirs for free?….It’s time to put the honest people, lifelong taxpayers and victims, in front of the line to receive the benefits of tax dollars with programs to get them back to work. Let the criminals step to the rear. (DeAngelis, 2014)

Despite tonal differences, the messaging is similar: it’s unfair to spend taxpayer money in order to subsidize (or fund in full) the education of people who have been found guilty of

crimes, especially when costs are so high for "law-abiding" students. Whether delivered in an understated or provocative manner, the instrumental and the moral are intertwined as part of a clear and straightforward message. This is a trend missing in expressions of support for higher education in prison.

Lack of Depth and Cohesion in the Moral Response to Critics

Moral frames in support of higher education in prison, as Table 3 demonstrates, were the least invoked within the data, only appearing within 33% of coded articles (70 articles out of 211). It was also the least frequently invoked in terms of total references, with 145 references out of a total of 1,846 (8%), suggesting it not only rarely appeared in news stories, but even when it *did* appear, it was not very prevalent within the given articles. Additionally, there was no single moral frame in support of college-in-prison that appeared with much regularity. The most common was a call to civic principles, but that frame only appeared in 35 articles with 54 total references.

Even within moral frames that showed up within the data, many of them were invoked as unspecified moral claims. This specific frame occurred in 21 articles with 24 total references, advocating support for prison education on moral grounds without providing further explication. For example, within a 2018 program update in the *Times Union*, a higher education in prison advocate was quoted as saying, "I know for some this is hard to swallow, but doing this for these guys, it's just the right thing to do" (Eaton-Robb, 2018). Such framing makes a moral claim, yet fails to explicate *why* the development of programs is "the right thing to do," leaving readers to their own assumptions and conclusions. It does not directly respond to critics who claim prison

education is unfair because it prioritizes “criminals” over “upstanding” students facing high tuitions and large debts.

The types of arguments outlined in this study’s literature review hardly appeared at all within the data. Castro (2018) and Conway (2020) contend that higher education programs in prison should be positioned as a way to counterbalance racial and wealth inequities at the heart of mass incarceration. Such arguments frame the issue as a recognition of the need for humanizing responses to an imperfect and overly retributive criminal justice system. Yet, these types of claims rarely show up within news coverage, with the frame of higher education in prison as a response to class and/or wealth dynamics only appearing within 28 articles with 39 references, and the frame of programs as a response to racial dynamics appearing even less often, within 19 articles with 28 references.

As Bowman (2018) and Kim et al. (2010) suggest, such findings are not entirely surprising, given the typical reticence of news media to provide nuanced discussions of racial and/or class issues. Even when these frames were invoked, as Table 5 demonstrates, they were most often invoked implicitly, and not as part of an explicit justification for programs. This was a trend very much at odds with other leading framing mechanisms. The end result of the lack of prevalence of any single moral frame in support of programs—as well as a lack of explicitness when such frames *were* invoked—is that no clear and convincing moral argument in response to critics often materialized. The arguments of critics were largely left unaddressed, allowed to go unchallenged.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's empirical examination of newspaper articles in New York media comes with certain limitations. Most notably, scholars like Philo (2007) have previously cautioned that analytic inferences derived from methodologies grounded in "text-only" approaches necessarily limit researchers' capacity to accurately interpret data, given the manifold ways authors and readers derive meaning from texts. While the subjectivity involved in interpreting text is important to bear in mind, Philo's concerns should not preclude the undertaking of such efforts. The intent here is not to provide a definitive perspective from which to interpret media discourse, but rather to contribute to literatures that have undertaken similar aims.

Likewise, given the logistical impossibility of comprehensively analyzing all 121 New York newspaper outlets, the analysis may be subject to unintended restrictions within sampling decisions. Text-mining could have been employed to include a larger sample, but depth of analysis was preferred over sample size for the purposes of more fully understanding the various contours of media discourse. Furthermore, content analysts may prefer quantified approaches to clarify coding disambiguation processes (e.g., reporting Krippendorff's alpha as a manifest measurement of intercoder reliability) (Krippendorff, 2018). In this respect, the epistemological assumptions within this study are consistent with the decision to focus on broader thematic outcomes emerging from the coding. Of course, extending the implications of this study beyond the media and policy context of New York should be done with caution. Any novelty within this study's findings can animate future research guided by similar epistemic assumptions to further

enhance understandings of how the media represents the debate over higher education in prison.

Beyond the implications this study has for future research relating to higher education in prison, it also has potential implications relating to its conceptual design and methodology. As many have observed—most notably for the purposes of this study, Burkhardt (2014) and Montes et al. (2020)—news media has a propensity to oversimplify debates relating to matters of criminal justice. Aligning with these findings, this study has demonstrated the lack of a fully nuanced moral framing of the debate within the media, as opposed to a much more frequently invoked (and more easily comprehended) instrumental framing. For future research, it is relevant to question whether this pattern of favoring the instrumental over the moral extends beyond the realm of the media's coverage of matters relating to criminal justice. It may indicate a larger trend in which media has become reluctant to engage with moral and/or civic questions at the heart of many of the most pressing socio-political debates. Given Yettick's (2015) assertion regarding the wide-ranging impact media can have on policy decision making, this question seems vital in better understanding how popular debates are discussed and understood.

Conclusion

With the announcement of the 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill, which includes funding for the full restoration of Pell Grants for incarcerated students, it is unquestionably a time of promise for higher education in prison. This holds true for students and educators, as well as administrators and advocates. As such policies come to be implemented (as was the case in New York), debates over their merit will undoubtedly

play out within news media. Newspapers, despite now often facing financial challenges, continue to play an important role in both reflecting and shaping public perception on social issues and matters of policy, particularly in relation to matters of criminal justice. The purpose of this study was to examine the contours of public discourse surrounding the debate over higher education in prison as represented in mainstream newspaper outlets. Relying on a thematic content analysis of newspaper articles printed within a state very much on the forefront of higher education in prison policy, it revealed the paucity of a fully nuanced moral framing of the debate, at least as compared to a much more frequently invoked instrumental framing.

This study demonstrates that supporters and critics are largely talking past each other within the media. Criticisms of higher education in prison blend together instrumental and moral framings of the issue in arguing that it is immoral to spend taxpayer funds on educational opportunities in prison when such opportunities are so financially costly for "law-abiding" students. Support for such programs and policies, however, largely ignores moral framings in lieu of instrumental arguments relating to reduced recidivism and taxpayer savings. Such arguments leave unimpeded the most salient criticisms of higher education in prison, and fail to fully consider the issue from a moral and/or civic perspective. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which socio-political policy initiatives are covered within the media, and suggest a potentially concerning trend in which the media fails to adequately engage and address important moral and/or civic questions at the core of contentious social policy issues.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANDRAGOGY IN PRISON: HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON AND THE TENETS OF ADULT EDUCATION

Abstract

This article explores teaching practices in prison and synthesizes literatures relating to the fields of andragogy and prison education, bringing these two domains into conversation with each other. It is a key moment to reflect on teaching practices inside carceral settings. As Pell Grant availability for prisoners is set to expand dramatically, many college and university faculty members are soon likely to be entering prisons as teachers for the first time. This article contends that the tenets of andragogy provide a useful framework for developing and structuring prison education course syllabi, activities, assignments, and evaluation methods. With the aim of valuing students' life experiences and assisting in the process of self-direction, andragogical teaching methods can help combat some of the most harmful dynamics inside prisons, encouraging incarcerated students to maintain an important degree of agency over their own learning.

Introduction

Higher education opportunities in US prisons are set to expand dramatically. After more than two decades without any federal support following the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill (which banned access for prisoners to Pell Grants, and effectively ended the majority of college-level prison education programs), the 2016 Second Chance Pell Program has been instrumental in assisting colleges and universities in the development and expansion of higher education programs in prison. As part of the federal initiative, roughly 22,000 incarcerated students in more than 100 federal and state prisons have enrolled in college-level educational programming. Initially, 63 colleges and universities throughout the country were selected to participate, but that number is now more than tripling, as the federal initiative is currently expanding to up to 200 different colleges and universities within 42 states and the District of Columbia (US Department of Education, 2016, 2021). Second Chance Pell has been so well received that it has led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability for prisoners, which is set to take effect as early as 2023, with funding for the proposal included as part of the recent 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, better known as the COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill (Burke, 2021; US Department of Education, 2021).

As prison education programs continue to take root and develop, many university and college faculty members will likely be entering prison facilities for the first time. It will be particularly important for them to reflect on teaching practices inside carceral settings, especially in how they might differ from what takes place on college campuses. The context, after all, in which teaching and learning take place within higher education in prison programs is much different, as students assume responsibility for their

educations within settings that often seek to constrain and limit their freedom to pursue those goals (Castro & Brawn, 2017; Davis & Michaels, 2015). Beyond the restrictive environment within prisons themselves, pedagogies for college teaching are often designed to engage the "typical" college-aged student, students who are teenagers or in their early twenties (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). In contrast, prison classrooms often reflect an assortment of age groups, with it being common to have both teenagers and students in their fifties and sixties in the same classroom (Dewey et al., 2020; Pelletier & Evans, 2019).

Teaching strategies within higher education in prison programs should respond to these realities by adopting practices that respond to the diversity and breadth of life experiences common in prison classrooms. The purpose of this paper is to explore teaching practices capable of doing just that. I argue that the tenets of *andragogy*—those often associated with adult education—provide a useful framework for developing and structuring teaching practices within carceral settings. In what follows, I first provide a review of current literature on teaching practices inside prisons before describing my own experiences working within the criminal justice system and teaching in college-level prison education programs. In so doing, I delineate the beliefs and values undergirding the analytic strategy for the present paper. I then outline the six main tenets of andragogy and discuss their implications for teaching in prison, drawing on both the literature and my own experiences of practice to suggest specific strategies that may prove useful to those who teach inside prison walls. I ultimately posit that careful deliberation of andragogical teaching methods can profoundly impact the design of prison education

course syllabi, assignments, and evaluation methods, as well as inform administrators of strategies for meaningful program and curricula development.

Current Scholarship Relating to Teaching Practices in Prison

Much of the current literature relating to teaching practices in prison relates, perhaps expectedly, to the specific environment in which such teaching takes place, how instruction and learning is both impacted by—and can be responsive to—prison settings. Warner (2007) contends that prison education primarily can be perceived from two very different perspectives. One relies on viewing prison education through the lens of a "deficit model," in which students are primarily perceived as offenders in need of rehabilitation, the focus of educational programming geared explicitly toward lowering recidivism rates. Recent scholarship indicates the pitfalls of this perspective (Conway, 2020; Baumgartner & Sandoval, 2018; Castro, 2018). Such a classroom environment is unlikely to lead to liberatory experiences for students, instead functioning as yet another tool to diminish students' sense of worth. As Castro & Gould (2018) note, such an orientation toward students can be "dehumanizing, pathologizing, and inconsistent with authentic processes of teaching and learning that stem from the rich experiences and livelihoods of individuals and communities" (p. 3).

Warner (2007) suggests that such perspectives are likely to overestimate what college-level education can accomplish in the face of prison environments in which students often face abuse, humiliation, inhumane conditions, and alienation from society (p. 173). Castro & Brawn (2017) extend on this point, highlighting the inherent paradoxical tensions that exist between college-level education that is often "emancipatory" in aim and focus, and the restrictive, dehumanizing elements of prison

life, suggesting that it is difficult for even the most socio-politically aware instructors to navigate such fraught environments. Such dynamics highlight the need, as Dewey et al. (2020) suggest, for instructors to respond to students' diverse needs and learning styles inside prison classrooms, as well as create space for collaborative, peer-driven learning environments. The risk of not doing so increases the likelihood of programs being perceived on the part of students as an additional form of social control (Pryor & Thompkins, 2013; Wilson et al., 2019), potentially leading to increased levels of external and internal stigmatization (Evans et al., 2018).

Prison education is not *a priori* a force for good. If not implemented thoughtfully, it can reinforce some of the more damaging interpersonal dynamics already latent within such settings, serving as yet another compulsory experience for students (Davis & Michaels, 2015). Arguable cornerstones of the American higher education system—such as the development of cognitive flexibility, self-expression, analytical skills, creativity, and the belief in the inherent dignity of individuals—are all heavily restricted inside prisons (McCorkel & DeFina, 2019). To counteract these harmful dynamics, Scott (2012) contends that instructors must be mindful to value and incorporate student perspectives, thus encouraging "intercultural exchange in opposition to the regressive stratification of society that has occurred under mass incarceration" (p. 29). Incarcerated students frequently claim that the most valuable aspects of their involvement in higher education are the complementary components of offering and receiving respect (Kallman, 2020; McCorkel, 1998), as well as active participation within programming that both proffers and expects from students a certain level of academic rigor (Hall & Killacky, 2008).

What perhaps is most needed are teaching practices in prison classrooms that effectively account for incarcerated students' lives. While a popular perspective is to view prison education merely as a means for rehabilitation, such an outlook, as Utheim (2016) suggests, fails to recognize how many students in prison come from "troubled" academic backgrounds, where the predominant conception of teaching and learning was one which took a top-down approach: the teacher as the ultimate authority on knowledge and the student as merely a repository for it. Evans (2018) contends that it is within its capacity to combat these types of harmful dynamics that higher education in prison is so potentially valuable, offering students an opportunity to reclaim a degree of agency over their own education and identities, as well as to help locate and define individual purpose within their own lives. In the face of personal histories that often include some combination of abuse, oppression, neglect, addiction, and self-doubt, the process of fostering independent thought and critical analysis skills capable of "confronting and integrating feelings of vulnerability, weakness, and failure" (Utheim, 2016, p. 98) is more likely to produce meaningful social change than the narrowly restrictive instrumental aims of workforce preparation. Kallman (2018) argues that developing such skills leads to a higher degree of compassion among students, which helps overcome the types of racial and cultural barriers that so frequently divide prisons.

Teaching strategies that emphasize and value process over content, critical thinking over rote memorization, and student agency over instructor absolutism, are particularly suitable for prison education programs because they are more likely to lead to meaningful individual and interpersonal educational experiences. It is precisely for these reasons that andragogical teaching methods have so much potential within these settings.

Malcom Knowles, the preeminent theorist within the field of andragogy, lays out six assumptions relating to adult education, among which are that adults' self-conception typically moves from a dependent personality toward self-direction; that adults accumulate a reservoir of experience that serves as a rich resource for learning; and that adults typically need to know specific reasons for undertaking academic endeavors (Knowles et al., 2020). Such an approach encourages instructors to facilitate environments where students are involved in the planning, delivery, and assessment of their own learning.

Andragogical teaching methods have a long and rich history, employing practices that often vary in relation to what takes place on "typical" college campuses. If a major aim of higher education in prison is to treat students as adults who maintain agency over their own learning, then these two fields should be in conversation with each other. An analysis of the six main tenets of andragogy, as well as the intersections and implications they have for teaching in prison, is an important step toward accomplishing that goal. First, however, it is important to foreground my own experiences working within the criminal justice system and higher education programs in prison, both to clarify my own beliefs and values in relation to teaching in prison, but also to establish a basis for the analytical strategy examining the relationship between andragogy and teaching in carceral settings.

Theoretical Orientation and Analytic Strategy

Before teaching literature and composition courses within two different prison education programs at universities in the Northeastern United States, and recently assuming directorship for one of them, I worked for several years as a criminal defense

investigator at public defender offices in both Washington, D.C., and Boston, MA. Investigating everything from misdemeanors to murder cases, my experiences offered me insight into how the judicial and carceral systems routinely ignore defendants and prisoners as individuals. I observed firsthand the ill-effects that incarceration can have on people. Many of my clients struggled with losing a sense of personal agency. Self-direction no longer existed in practical terms, as their fates often became decided by detectives and attorneys, judges and juries, and if convicted, wardens and correctional officers.

In many ways, such disempowerment seemed to me the very goal of the criminal justice system. This observation is hard to overstate. Everything about a prisoner's experience—from when to eat and drink, to where to be at given times of the day, to whom one can interact with—relates to a relinquishing of authority over one's own personhood. As Rodríguez (2010) notes, this loss of self-determination frequently leads to a type of "institutionalized dehumanization," in which prisons seek to implicitly—and, all too often, *explicitly*—deprive incarcerated people of their individual identities. Having directly observed these patterns, I knew when I began teaching in prison that I wanted to develop strategies that could help combat or counteract these trends, at least as much as was possible. The last thing I believed my students needed was a pedagogy (in Greek, the art and science of teaching children) that valued content over process, or instructor authority and "expertise" over student knowledge and experience.

In seeking alternatives to traditional pedagogies, I aimed within my teaching practice to afford students a degree of agency in the classroom. If the environment of prison habitually led to a loss of self-determination, I wanted through my teaching to help

return a degree of autonomy to students, at least within the context of their own learning. It was within this context that I began exploring, and eventually implementing, andragogical teaching methods into the courses I offered. I now have several years of experience using with these methods, incorporating them into courses I have led at both men's and women's prison facilities. My own practical experience using these strategies continues to inform and develop my own understanding of the ways in which the tenets of andragogy interact with both the formal and informal systems of the prison environment itself.

It should be noted at the outset that andragogy is grounded in the context of positive psychology, and thus centers individual experience (Knowles et al., 1998). There is tension between this "older" approach to andragogy and newer critical explorations that foreground systems of power and oppression (Duff, 2019; Hillock & Profitt, 2007). The main criticism of andragogical teaching methods is that they predominantly—and some critics would argue, *excessively*—focus on individuals, and do not explicitly take up issues relating to social change and/or equitable outcomes (Duff, 2019; Finger & Asun, 2001; Sandlin, 2005). As a field, andragogy is also predominantly grounded within the experiences of highly-educated White males, potentially undercutting its sociocultural relevance for more diverse learners (St. Clair & Käpplinger, 2021).

These critiques, stemming from critical perspectives, are especially relevant to consider given the context of mass incarceration and the widely documented, systemic inequities within the criminal justice system that disproportionately target communities of color and the financially poor (Looney & Turner, 2018; Simon, 2014). While the imprisonment rate for Black Americans has decreased 34% since 2006, the disparity in

overall incarceration rates remains stark. Black Americans make up 12% of the total population in the United States, yet comprise nearly 33% of its prison population (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). Incarceration is also very closely correlated with low employment rates and poverty (Western & Muller, 2013).

Teaching strategies in prison should aim to be responsive to the social context in which such education takes place. Students' identities, contexts, and interactions with systems of oppression can deeply affect their own individual development (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Torres et al., 2020). As a result, there are inherent limitations to purely constructivist approaches that do not explicitly take up, or account for, students' intersecting social identities. Andragogy, however, does not prevent the implementation of other theoretical frameworks, and, in fact, likely benefits from them. There can be a focus on the individual experience of students that also recognizes that such experience is deeply embedded in social context, one not necessarily precluding the other. An andragogical model is more concerned with *how* adult learning takes place, rather than defining particular aims and objectives. Emergent andragogical frameworks designed to incorporate critical perspectives have been developed to respond to the challenges of preparing educators who are committed to issues of social justice and equity (Brown, 2006; De Turk, 2011; Hillock & Profitt, 2007). As Brown (2006) observes: "the andragogical processes of critical reflection, rational discourse, and policy praxis can lead to a transformation of one's personal agency as well as deepen one's sense of social responsibility toward and with others" (p. 706).

Developing self-direction is not at odds with deepening a commitment to social justice, but, rather, can help make those commitments all that much stronger. While

careful consideration of the context in which higher education in prison takes place is necessary and important, it should not preclude the use of andragogical teaching methods. Rather, the recognition of the dehumanizing nature of incarceration makes the use of andragogy all the more relevant. Practices such as the development of self-direction and the valuing of learners' life experiences can help combat—at least in some considerable measure—the most harmful personal and interpersonal dynamics within carceral settings. As Zurro (2018) acknowledges, instructors in prison settings must "simultaneously remain conscious of the deep nexus of societal issues in a prison while also preventing that consciousness from overwhelming their ability to serve their students." Keeping this orientation toward student-serving practices in mind, the analytic strategy undergirding this paper is to examine the tenets of andragogy within the context of higher education in prison, drawing examples from my own teaching practice that underscore its particular relevance within these settings. In so doing, I explore how its implementation can help foster meaningful educational experiences for a diverse range of learners, suggesting strategies for practice that emerge both from the literature on andragogy and my own experiences teaching in prison.

The Six Tenets of Andragogy and Their Implications for Higher Education in Prison

The tenets of andragogy have been analyzed and critiqued extensively, and have been implemented within countless different settings. At its core, as Feur and Gerber (1988) describe, andragogy "is an honest attempt to focus on the learner…[and] provide an alternative to the methodology-centered instructional design perspective" (p. 3). It has been described as everything from a set of guidelines (Merriam, 1993) and assumptions

(Brookfield, 1986) to an all-encompassing philosophy (Pratt, 1993) and theoretical orientation (Knowles, 1989). The practice of andragogical teaching rests on six main principles that differ from those of typical pedagogies, particularly in how they relate to: (1) adult learners' need to know; (2) their self-conception as learners; (3) the importance of learners' prior experiences; (4) their readiness to learn; (5) their orientation to learning; and (6) their motivation to learn (Knowles et al., 2020).

The implications of each of these six principles intersect in important ways with teaching practices in higher education programs in prison. Andragogical teaching methods, by their very nature, are designed to be flexible. Knowles himself recognized that specific settings and situations demand practitioners to make adjustments in order to best respond to the particular circumstance in which teaching and learning take place (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 303). For instructors, it is critical to reflect iteratively on how andragogical assumptions affect (and are affected by) circumstance, with particular attention paid to how each assumption interacts with the given setting, the prescribed educational goals and objectives, as well as the educators and learners involved. Deliberate consideration of the intersections between the tenets of andragogy and college-level instruction in prison can help inform educators entering carceral settings:

(1) Adult Learners' Need to Know

Andragogy is premised on the basis of adult learners needing to understand the importance of learning something before they actually undertake the effort associated with doing so. The first task of an educator is to assist learners in recognizing the value of learning course content and material, with particular attention focused on how such learning is relevant within students' lives. This most typically involves a process early on

within a given course in which time is dedicated to supporting learners in discovering for themselves gaps between where they are at with their own learning and where they would like to be (Knowles, 2020, p. 43).

This first step is both especially important, but also presents unique challenges within carceral settings. Incarcerated students often enter higher education classrooms at various different points within their own educational development. The median age in prison is 36 (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2021), suggesting the likelihood of a much greater variety in terms of education and life experiences in prison classrooms. Student differences in the amount of prior exposure to higher education courses, time that has elapsed since being involved in educational pursuits, as well as differences in terms of the number of years remaining on prison sentences, may each impact student perspectives in relation to desired outcomes for coursework. Educators entering prison should be cognizant of how these differences in perspective manifest themselves in the classroom, with the early parts of coursework dedicated to discerning and learning about what individual students hope to gain from their involvement in the course. Achieving student academic goals may not always be easy to reconcile with the tendency of prisons to restrict what is considered permissible curricula (Castro & Brawn, 2017). Different prisons maintain different standards in relation to what is considered acceptable curricula, content, and work product (Wade, 2021), but a crucial part of prison educators' responsibilities should be to foster as much exploration as is possible within the confines of these limitations.

Supporting such exploration takes forethought and planning on the part of instructors. It is important to conduct either a formal or informal "andragogical learner

analysis" (described in fuller detail in the "Strategies for Practice" section of this paper) early in a given course to assess different learning styles and desired outcomes among students. During the first class meeting in my composition courses, for instance, I describe some of the broader course objectives and then ask students to reflect in writing on their own goals by providing them a brief prompt: "Why is it important to improve my writing skills? And what do I hope to gain from this course?" As a class, we then discuss their responses, collectively defining specific objectives for the course. After having reviewed what was turned in, I make sure to meet individually with students either before or after class instruction, in one-on-one meetings, or as part of smaller group workshops. The aim is to get to know students better at a personal level in order to work together to plan and strategize means for identifying and pursuing individual objectives in relation to both the broader course itself and within the particular prison setting.

(2) Adults' Self-Conception as Learners

In contrast to children and young adults, adult learners tend to conceive of themselves as being responsible for their own lives and decisions. As Knowles et al. (2020) note: "Once [adult learners] have arrived at that self-concept, they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction. They resent and resist situations in which they feel others are imposing their wills on them" (p. 44). This tenet of andragogy stands in direct contrast to how incarcerated students are typically treated in prison. The expectation is almost exclusively that they follow orders. Self-direction in prison is either heavily restricted or nonexistent. Such a pattern can have potentially debilitating effects, as research suggests that incarceration itself potentially causes a number of mental health issues: heightened stress,

anxiety, loneliness, and the experience of the dissolution of relationships, among many other detrimental effects (DeHart et al., 2018).

Combatting these harmful trends is a major part of what higher education in prison can provide, especially when implemented well. The classroom serves as a much-needed space for personal-development, a place where educators facilitate learning experiences in which the expectation of students is that they take responsibility for their own education, transitioning from the severity and oppressiveness of rigid rule-following toward self-direction and a measure of self-autonomy. The risk of not facilitating such experiences is that educational objectives can easily be subsumed by the dehumanizing aims of the prison itself. In fact, as Pryor and Thompkins (2013) note, many incarcerated students view higher education in prison as yet another tool used for social control, with the perception being that the design and implementation of programs are motivated by the needs of correctional officials rather than by the needs of the students themselves.

Andragogical teaching methods are useful for overcoming this perception, as they prioritize student involvement in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of course content in order to ensure that the learning taking place is done (at least to a large degree) on students' own terms. An example of this from my own practice can be observed in the case of Miranda (all names pseudonyms), a former student in my composition course. It was Miranda's first semester enrolled in the program, and it was clear from passing comments that she had certain reservations about her own involvement, fearing that the program was more aligned with the aims of prison administration than with the students themselves. Miranda had years of experience working in restaurants throughout New England, first as a waitress, then as both a line cook and chef. Her dream was to

eventually run her own restaurant that served Dominican food, reflecting her family heritage.

After brainstorming ideas together for her expository essay (an early-semester assignment that asks students to educate their readers on a specific topic, either from a list of suggested options or from one of their own choosing), Miranda decided to explain and describe the mechanisms necessary to operate a successful restaurant. In her essay, she walked readers through the culinary, budgetary, staffing, and marketing needs required. The benefits of the assignment, which included several drafts, were threefold: it allowed Miranda to develop specific writing skills; it enabled her to think through the logistics of working toward a personal goal; and it helped her build confidence in me as an instructor and the program itself, as it became clearer to her that the aim of the educational opportunities being afforded were genuinely geared to be student-serving, and not merely centered around prison dictates. The goal of such practices and assignments is to empower students to become invested in their own education, rather than feel as though they are solely following additional external commands.

(3) The Importance of Learners' Prior Experiences

Andragogy encourages educators to value and incorporate learners' life experiences into the classroom. Adults enter classroom environments with both a greater volume and different quality of life experience than do younger learners. This typically translates into a wider range of individual differences between learners in terms of backgrounds, learning styles, motivations, and interests (Knowles et al., 2020). Andragogical teaching methods embrace these differences by recognizing that adult learners' prior experiences often form the richest reservoir for fostering learning. In

prisons, this diversity of experience is especially prevalent, as students often arrive in the prison classroom coming from very different backgrounds, and with very different life experiences (Gaskew, 2015).

Prisons are multicultural in terms of population, but often heavily segregated along racial, ethnic, and cultural lines (Bloch & Olivares-Pelayo, 2021; Hemmens, 2000). By encouraging students to pursue academic goals they find personally relevant while also respecting and contributing to the academic goals of their peers, andragogy promotes multicultural exchange. Differences in terms of students' life experiences are explored and respected as potential resources for learning rather than treated as hindrances. Emphasis is placed on techniques that make use of learners' experiences, such as group discussions, simulation exercises, and problem-solving activities (Knowles et al., 2020). Peer-education is prioritized within andragogy, aligning well with research that suggests peer-based and peer-led curricula are effective across a whole range of different program types in prison (Devilly et al., 2005).

A prime example of a peer-based activity often occurs in one of the literature courses I offer in prison. A common text students read in the course is Jamaica Kincaid's, *A Small Place*. The text inevitably leads to discussions regarding the enduring legacies of colonialism and slavery, captured most evocatively by Kincaid's descriptions of the tourism industry in her native Antigua. Rather than simply lecture on the book, placing myself in the position of "expert," I instead ask students to prepare questions before entering class that help guide discussion. I then step in to facilitate, if needed, but often take a backseat to enable students themselves to steer the conversation. In doing so, students frequently incorporate their own experiences and identities in relationship to

tourism to help think through and evaluate healthier dynamics for the industry. Such practices not only value students' individual life experiences, but also benefit from the breadth and depth of diversity in the classroom by fostering the capacity to listen to and respect differing viewpoints and opinions.

(4) Adult Learners' Readiness to Learn

One of the major goals and challenges of an instructor employing andragogical teaching methods is to design a course that meets students where they are at within their own development as learners. In prison settings, this challenge is manifold, as students not only often come from educational backgrounds that prioritized a top-down, student-as-repository approach, but also from a more immediate prison environment in which self-direction is in all practical terms prohibited. As Utheim (2016) observes, "this suspension of the self as austere, habituated prison property is sudden and stark; the reclamation of autonomy can be a challenge" (p. 96). Some students will likely be perfectly prepared for self-direction, but others will no doubt prefer more traditional pedagogies and rubric-style assessments in order to gauge their own progress.

For instance, two former students in my college writing course, Nelson and João, exemplify how an andragogical approach requires flexibility. Both students were of Cape Verdean descent. Nelson was in his mid-40s and born in the United States. He was a strong writer and had been halfway toward earning a college degree at the time of his first involvement in the criminal justice system. João was in his late-20s, had recently immigrated to the US from Cape Verde, and while he spoke English well, he needed some help with sentence structure and grammar. Nelson was perfectly prepared for self-direction on assignments, preferring feedback that would help him strengthen and expand

on his own self-developed lines of inquiry. João, on the other hand, preferred rubric-style grading that allowed him to track his development in relation to issues of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence clarity.

Under the tenets of andragogy, an instructor must be flexible, prepared not only to assist learners through activities, exercises, and mentorship toward self-direction, but also meet students at their own level of engagement with course material. With Nelson, I took on the role of facilitator, helping him brainstorm ideas, develop and strengthen whatever themes he advanced in his writing, and pushed him to polish specific elements of his essays. With João, I similarly encouraged him to define, examine, and value his independent and critical thinking skills, but also made sure to provide very practical feedback in relation to the nuts and bolts of sentence-level writing. The goal within andragogy is not to boundlessly pursue self-direction on the part of students, regardless of their needs as learners, but instead to place the individual student at the center of their own development and learning process.

(5) Adult Learners' Orientation to Learning

According to Knowles et al. (2020), adult learners tend to be task- and problem-oriented. When it comes to learning, they seek content and material that either is personally or professionally relevant. In prison, of course, this dynamic is further complicated by the fact that students in the classroom are actively serving out prison sentences, with some students closer to release than others. Students who are closer to a release are likely to have a very different orientation to learning than those who still have several years (if not longer) to serve. It is important that course content and work product be responsive to this reality. Some students will likely be interested in exploring personal

histories, developing competencies and expertise in specific subject matters, and/or cultivating deeper understandings of various concepts and theoretical frameworks. Others, however, will likely be very motivated by the demands of the job market and workforce preparation.

Flexibility is again key. Most instruction in my writing courses, for example, deals with preparing students for the rigors of college-level assignments. But I also make sure to devote specific teaching modules to more practical matters, such as how to craft resumes, cover letters, and personal statements. Drawing connections between seemingly disparate topics (or, in the case of my courses, forms of writing) can help reinforce for students how the skills they develop in class can be applied outside it. An argument essay, for instance, shares certain traits with a cover letter, the two requiring similar skill sets that can be strengthened with attention to clarity and organization in writing. Andragogical teaching methods require that instructors strike a careful balance between the various goals students have when entering the classroom environment, empowering students both to pursue educational aims that they find personally relevant and meaningful, and to draw connections between what takes place in class and their individual pursuits beyond it.

(6) Adult Learners' Motivation to Learn

The final tenet of andragogy relates to learners' motivations in the classroom. For adult learners, internal motivations take priority over external factors, such as grades, test scores, or instructor approval. That is not to suggest that external motivations do not matter, only that the most potent motivators come from internal resources (e.g., aspiring for a specific job post-release, or a personal desire for a deeper understanding of subject

material). As McGrath (2009) notes, fostering learner autonomy is a prioritized outcome within andragogy, as a chief benefit is that "the student is no longer dependent on [the instructor] for learning as they would have been when they were children in primary and secondary school" (p. 108).

Whereas younger learners often pursue and welcome external approval as a prime motivator, adult learners tend to seek greater autonomy and self-accountability within their own educations. I involve students directly in assessing their work product in a given course. Final grades are determined through the use of learning contracts (described more fully in "Strategies for Practice"), a practice that aims to make methods of evaluation more meaningful for students by including them in the process of deciding individual course objectives, as well as how those objectives are to be assessed. From my own experiences—as well as in discussion with other instructors—adult learners tend to hold themselves to high standards when it comes to grading. If there is a serious discrepancy in which a student believes they deserve a significantly higher grade, the matter is resolved through discourse and dialogue, using the learning contract as a point of reference. Rather than merely claiming authority, it often proves helpful to appeal to adult learners' sense of personal accountability. In such circumstances, it is important both to listen to the student and to communicate directly what areas for improvement are still needed. In doing so, the grading process becomes more relevant for students, as they have taken an active role in it.

Strategies for Practice in Prison Classrooms

Conducting an "Andragogical Learner Analysis"

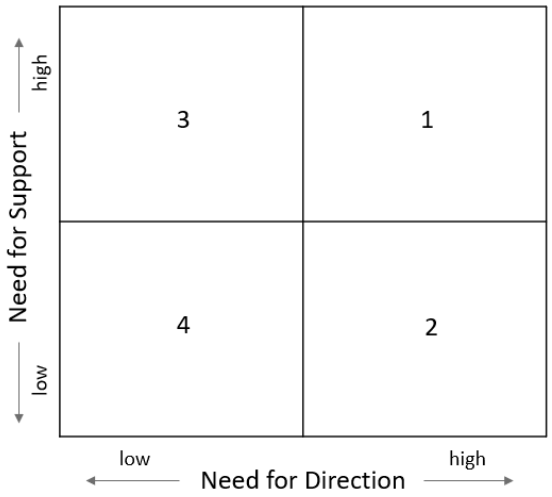
Part of the value of higher education in prison is within its capacity to create spaces where incarcerated students can reconceptualize themselves as learners and scholars rather than how they are often treated elsewhere inside prison walls, as mere prison property. As Key and May (2019) observe, the goal inside many prison education programs is to reconfigure the very notion of what it means to be incarcerated: "When prisoners enroll in classes, they are participating in a discourse that produces them as scholars instead of inmates, learners instead of threats, people instead of numbers" (p. 14). To better ensure that the transition from "prisoner" to "learner" is achieved effectively for students, it is crucial that instructors dedicate time and effort early in a given course to understanding the individualized goals of students, their preferred learning styles, as well as their desire and preparedness for self-direction as part of the course.

Equally as important as clearly defining the objectives of a given course (as well as explaining how those objectives may be potentially valuable and relevant to students) is the process of taking inventory of the particular individual characteristics and learning styles among the students involved (Knowles, 2020, p. 43). By doing so, the instructor underscores their role as a facilitator of learning rather than a mere presenter of content and material (Pratt, 1998). This prioritization of learner agency over tightly-held instructor control is not unique to andragogy, also appearing within Illich's (1970) deschooling educational theory, Rogers' (1969) person-centered approach, and Freire's (1970) *conscientização*, among others. Researchers have developed formalized tools for

assessing student engagement with (and preparedness for) andragogical teaching methods (see, for example, Bates' [2020] Andragogy in Practice Inventory) but the process need not be completely prescribed.

Activities or assignments taking place early in a semester not only can be used as touchstones to return to throughout the course, but also as opportunities to assess where individual students are within their own learning development and desire for self-direction. Such a process is best facilitated by an instructor who works to achieve a better understanding of students as individual learners and scholars, and in so doing, seeks to be responsive to their academic goals, learning styles, and specific orientations to course material. This can only be accomplished through careful assessment of student work and through open dialogue with students themselves. Pratt (1988) provides a useful tool for evaluating where students are within their own development as learners, laying out a four-quadrant model for evaluating the level of direction and support individual students might need (see, Figure 3).

Figure 3: Pratt's (1988) Model of High and Low Direction and Support



Within a higher education prison classroom, andragogical instructors are likely to encounter a whole range of different types of learners: those who need both direction and emotional support in the learning process (quadrant 1), those who likely will need substantial direction but not require continuing support after receiving it (quadrant 2), those who are self-directed but seek out support in accomplishing their academic goals (quadrant 3), and those who prefer to be more or less autonomous in their own learning (quadrant 4). Instructors, of course, will have their own goals in terms of course objectives, and it is important that these be shared and communicated directly; however, as a course moves along, instructors should seek to take on the role of classroom facilitator, tailoring their approach by responding to the uniqueness of the learners involved. Such an approach is more likely to be successful if an instructor has performed either a formal or informal analysis of students' individual learning needs and preferences.

Incorporating Student Perspectives and Experience in the Classroom

Experiential learning techniques and practices are prioritized within an andragogical teaching model. This stems from a key recognition, as described by Knowles et al. (2020): "To children, experience is something that happens to them; to adults, experience is who they are" (p. 45). If adult learners' experiences are diminished or devalued, it is akin to a rejection at a personal level. In fact, one of the richest resources for learning that adult learners have is their own experiences. A useful model often implemented within the field of andragogy is Kolb's (1984) suggested teaching and learning strategies for adults. Table 6 clarifies each of the four steps for implementing experiential learning in the classroom.

Table 6: Kolb's (1984) Model, Teaching and Learning Strategies for Adults

Kolb's Stage	Example Learning or Teaching Strategy
Concrete Experience	Simulation, case study, field trip, real experience, demonstrations
Observe and Reflect	Discussion, small groups, buzz groups, designated observers
Abstract Conceptualization	Sharing content
Active Experimentation	Internships, practice sessions

While some of these activities are unlikely to be allowed within prison settings (field trips and internships being the most obvious examples), many are capable of being implemented throughout the duration of a given course. Real-life scenarios and case studies are particularly useful for connecting course material to learners' prior experiences, as students can draw on their own depths of knowledge in order to work through and discuss hypotheticals. Peer-educational activities—such as classroom discussions, small group work, and peer-led exercises—allow for students to share and take in knowledge from each other, which has been found useful both in breaking down cultural barriers inside prison as well as honoring the importance of individual experience (Davis & Michaels, 2015). Kolb's teaching and learning strategies provide but one model for making use of learners' prior experience, but it helps demonstrate the types of activities likely to be useful in both adult learning and prison education settings.

As previously noted, andragogical teaching methods suggest that instructors increasingly seek to shift from the position of "content expert" to the role of learning facilitator: providing thoughtful, student-centered feedback; assisting in the brainstorming of ideas; and providing suggestions and strategies in an iterative fashion.

Doing so encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and become more self-directed, something which may at first be difficult to accomplish, but all the more necessary, given how little agency they are offered outside of the classroom setting.

Implementing Learning Contracts

A major contribution from the field of andragogy to adult education is the development of learning contracts. Learning contracts help resist the more compulsory aspects of formalized education. As Meadows (2019) notes, "compulsory experiences are rarely joyful and generally contribute to the transactional model of education. To develop self-efficacy, individuals must feel they have an appropriate level of autonomy, of self-direction" (p. 59). Within prisons, transactional models of education are especially worrisome, as incarcerated students are forced to bear compulsory—and often dehumanizing—experiences on a near constant basis.

A learning contract can help promote a greater level of autonomy in the learning process, as students actively participate not only in developing their own individual learning objectives, but also in establishing how their work will be assessed and evaluated. Instructors are likely to have their own set of predetermined goals and objectives for a course, but learning contracts can "provide a means for negotiating a reconciliation between these external needs and expectations and the learner's internal needs and interests" (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 325). Such a process is accomplished through one-on-one conversations between instructor and student, so that both have a say in deciding objectives, as well as how those objectives will later be assessed and evaluated.

This is best done early in a given course, after the goals of the instructor have been communicated, and after either a formal or informal "andragogical learner analysis" has been conducted. While both the instructor and the individual student sign the document as a way to formalize the process, the contract remains dynamic in character. Both the individual student and the instructor can update or amend the document as goals and objectives shift over the course of a semester (Knowles et al., 2020, p. 326). Toward the end of the course, the contract is again reviewed, enabling both parties a chance to evaluate the progress that was made.

The conferral of grades, although often required, can veer toward a more transactional model of education. Research relating to prison education programs, however, reveals that incarcerated students often seek out rigor and professionalism in their educational programming, which frequently coincides with maintaining high standards and a degree of objectivity in grading (Hall & Killacky, 2008; Kallman, 2020). Learning contracts can help reconcile the divide between offering accountability and fostering self-direction in learning. They can help make grades more meaningful for students, determined through a process of discussion and dialogue rather than solely through the delivery of a given mark or letter grade.

Conclusion

With the recent renewal of Pell Grant availability, higher education opportunities in prison are about to become more accessible than at any time in recent history. This is unquestionably a major step forward for prison education advocates and activists. And, yet, with so many higher education instructors likely to begin teaching inside prison facilities for the first time, it is vital that they engage with students in a way that does not

merely reinforce harmful prison dynamics. Prisons, by their very nature, comprise a punitive form of justice. As scholarship demonstrates, they often communicate messages—whether intentionally or not—that those incarcerated inside their walls pose a danger or a threat, that they are people who deserve to be removed from broader society, or potentially even worse, that they are unimportant and dispensable. It is not surprising, given these conditions, that prisoners often struggle to maintain a sense of self-determination, especially considering that part of the aim of prisons is to disempower people, to limit their capacity for individual agency. Teaching strategies inside prison walls should seek to counteract this treatment.

As this analytic review of literature relating to prison education teaching strategies reveals, it is nearly impossible to separate the educational experiences within prison education programs from the environments in which they take place. It is crucial that instructors recognize that such programs do not intrinsically comprise a tool for good. Deficit models and top-down pedagogical approaches can inadvertently diminish students' self-worth and the likelihood for meaningful engagement with material, potentially leading to the perception that educational programs are merely an extension of the prison itself. Instructors seeking to avoid these outcomes would do well to consider teaching methods that value and make use of student experience, and create spaces for students to retain and develop an important degree of self-direction and agency as part of their learning.

Andragogical teaching methods offer a useful framework in providing a means to these ends. Andragogy provides a model that emphasizes process over content, fosters student involvement in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of course material and work

product, and relies on students' prior experiences as a valuable resource from which to base learning. By promoting and aiding development toward self-direction, it offers a needed measure of agency and responds to adult learners' prioritization of internal over external motivators. Finally, the flexibility of andragogical principles accommodates additional teaching paradigms and encourages instructors to meet students where they are within their own learning. All of these characteristics are of prime importance in carceral settings. The expansion of Pell Grants for prisoners provides a unique opportunity for institutions of higher education to respond to the challenges of mass incarceration. Andragogy provides a mechanism for doing so in a thoughtful, student-centered fashion.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This dissertation project set out to explore and identify justifications for higher education in prison that extend beyond mere appeals to instrumental aims—such as reduced recidivism and taxpayer savings—in order to better capture the full moral vigor necessary to sustain long-term commitments to prison education policies and programs. I sought to better understand the perspectives of students who had been beneficiaries of such programs in relation to where they located purpose and meaning within their educational experiences. I sought to examine media discourse on the debate over higher education in prison to determine the extent to which such discourse either aligned, or failed to align, with current theoretical and empirical understandings of the need for higher education in prison. And, finally, I sought to consider the pedagogical implications of adjusting the lens through which programs are defended.

To accomplish these goals, I conducted three linked investigations. First, I completed a phenomenological study exploring the experiences of 21 formerly incarcerated students within the Boston University Prison Education Program, one of the longest running higher education in prison programs in the country. I then conducted a thematic content analysis of 243 newspaper articles appearing in six different New York-based newspapers from February 1, 2013 to January 31, 2020. This particular study was grounded in the state of New York, a state at the vanguard of state-level higher education in prison policies. Finally, I explored the use of andragogical teaching methods—those associated with the tenets of adult education—in order to examine how adjusting the lens of how programs are justified might impact the orientation and efficacy of prison education classroom teaching strategies.

It should be noted that the studies included as part of this dissertation were carried out during a particularly unique moment in the history of higher education in prison. The continual expansion of Second Chance Pell has now led to the likely full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons (US Department of Education, 2021). And, yet, while such news has been met with great enthusiasm among prison education advocates, a simultaneous existential threat to programs has emerged in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. The danger that the virus poses inside prisons has been well-documented, as overcrowding in prisons and the lack of ability to socially distance has led to high rates of infection (Leibowitz et al., 2021; Saloner et al., 2020). The pandemic has driven many higher education programs in prison to either temporarily suspend course offerings, or else dramatically reorganize and restructure their curricula (Montenegro, 2021). Many programs have been forced to rely on virtual learning (when allowed by individual prison administrations) or some form of correspondence packet-learning in order to continue offering coursework (diZerega & Dholakia, 2021).

As a result, the current moment in which this dissertation has been completed is one of both immense promise and tenuous peril for the future of higher education in prison. In light of both the overall aims of this project, as well as the current unique circumstances surrounding college-level prison education, the purpose of this final chapter is to: a.) place the major findings of each of the three studies included in this dissertation in conversation with one another; b.) expound on their implications for policy and practice; and c.) discuss their limitations and consider areas for future research. The aim is to help ensure that the findings delineated within each study will not only assist policy makers in developing and expanding sustainable initiatives, but also support

educators and administrators in the creation of effective and responsive teaching strategies and curricula.

Summary of Major Findings

Formerly Incarcerated Student Perspectives: Melding Together the Instrumental and Personal

In the first article of this dissertation, the reduction of the risk of recidivism was certainly found to be important among participants from the Boston University Prison Education Program. In fact, many participants identified the likelihood of reduced recidivism as one of the major aspects encouraging them to apply and initially enroll in the program. However, participants in the study identified several additional reasons for why the program was meaningful to them. These reasons were much more personal in nature than the purely instrumental aims of reduced recidivism, often relating to achieving a figurative sense of freedom while incarcerated.

The first theme to emerge was that participants placed great value on the communal aspects of the program under study. Compared to the relative lack of opportunity inside prison to develop meaningful interpersonal relationships, participants described involvement in the prison education program as a chance to participate in a much healthier social environment. Bridging common divides in prison that often break along racial, economic, and geographic lines, the program helped students find common ground with their peers, fostering a community of mutual respect, intellectual engagement, and communal support. Relationships developed with program administrators and faculty members teaching within the program were found to be similarly impactful. Creating an important connection to life beyond the confines of the

prison, these relationships were described as being grounded in both camaraderie and accountability. Program administrators and faculty often afforded students a sense of dignity and worth that was hard to find elsewhere inside prison.

A second theme emerging from the interviews was that participation in the program allowed both for the development of tangible skills, as well as for the deepening of personal interests. These types of experiences were often placed in contrast to the environment of the prison, which seldom fostered meaningful opportunities for personal development, as well as to participants' lives prior to incarceration, in which engagement with quality educational opportunities were described as being minimal at best. The Boston University program was frequently cited as helping to break (or at least combat) an injurious cycle, in which negative educational experiences and personal traumas were then only exacerbated by the debilitating environment of the prison itself. Participants routinely described prison as a harrowing experience. The ability to actively engage in learning, develop hard and soft skills, and work toward earning a college degree helped combat these experiences by providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

A final theme that emerged was the program's role in encouraging a deeper capacity for self-reflection and inquiry. Because of the restrictive environment of the prison, participants found it meaningful when they were encouraged to find forms of self-direction in their learning. Rather than merely be "dictated to" by faculty, participants felt encouraged to take an important degree of ownership over their own education. Participants described feeling liberated to reach their own conclusions, both in relation to reflecting on dynamics within their own lives, but also in relation to social structures,

historical trends, and matters concerning individual identity. That these types of experiences were neither prescriptive nor coercive was considered by participants as especially significant, in part because it stood in such direct contrast to the interpersonal and intrapersonal dynamics inside the prison itself.

Talking Past Each Other: Media Coverage of the Debate Over Higher Education in Prison

The types of justifications for higher education in prison identified by formerly incarcerated students in the first article of this dissertation are almost entirely missing from the findings of the second article. In exploring the framing mechanisms used in the discourse appearing within news media articles discussing higher education in prison, it was clear that advocates and critics of such programs rely on widely divergent frames. Advocates primarily relied on instrumental frameworks related to reduced recidivism and taxpayer savings, while critics were fundamentally more concerned with questioning the ethics of providing free or subsidized higher education to "criminals" when such opportunities remain so expensive for everyone else. These types of criticisms of higher education in prison were delivered at times in measured terms, and at others in a more emotionally charged manner, but the messaging itself typically remained simple and direct.

The moral response to critics from advocates of higher education in prison was largely found to be lacking. The types of justifications located within the first article of this dissertation were in all practical terms non-existent within the data. Neither was there much prevalence of the types of arguments frequently made by educators working within such programs, which typically relate to the view of higher education in prison as a

response to the racial and economic inequalities within American communities and society writ large. Even when such framings of the debate *did* appear within news stories, they were frequently only made in an implicit fashion, failing to draw explicit connections between racial and economic inequalities within the courts and justice system and the support of higher education programs in prison. The result was that no clear response to the arguments of critics materialized within the news coverage, leaving such criticisms unaddressed and unchallenged.

The lack of a coherent response to critics potentially endangers higher education in prison programs and policies. While instrumental framings of the debate may garner support during times of broad-based backing for criminal justice reform, they are unlikely to be as durable if and when public sentiment and political trade winds shift. Mobilizing the types of moral and civic arguments described by educators, as well as the types of justifications identified by participants within the first article of this dissertation, will help reframe support for programs and policies as a necessary public good, better ensuring their durability and long-term survival. A recidivist defense of programs leaves them susceptible to the fluctuations of empirical findings and public sentiment on matters of crime and justice, whereas a moral justification is grounded on more enduring principles related to human dignity and equality of opportunity.

Teaching Practices Responsive to the Prison Environment

Given the findings of the first article in this dissertation, which highlight how students involved in higher education in prison programs value the capacity to pursue and explore personal interests, it is important that teaching methods in carceral settings be responsive to students' desire for self-direction in learning. This dissertation's third

article explores one particular teaching methodology capable of doing just that. The tenets of andragogy—teaching practices found to be effective within the domain of adult education—provide a useful framework for considering teaching strategies in prison. As explored by examining the intersections and implications its tenets have for teaching in carceral settings, andragogy is a particularly useful methodology because it aims to treat students as adults who should maintain agency over their own learning.

Andragogical teaching methods accomplish this in several ways: 1.) they recognize adult learners' tendency to need to understand the importance of learning something before actually undertaking the effort to do so; 2.) they value adult learners' desire to conceive of themselves as responsible for their own lives and decisions; 3.) they respect and incorporate students' life experiences into the dynamics of coursework and discussions; 4.) they place focus on meeting students where they are within their own development as learners; 5.) they are responsive to adult learners' inclination toward task- and problem-oriented coursework; and, finally, 6.) they appeal to adult learners' propensity to be driven by internal motivations rather than external factors, such as grades.

Prison education faculty can accomplish these aims in a variety of ways. As suggested, the implementation of conducting "andragogical learner analyses" in order to take inventory of students' individual characteristics and learning styles, the placing of emphasis on experiential learning opportunities, and the use of learning contracts are all methods for ensuring that teaching practices inside prisons are suitable and responsive to the aims and needs of incarcerated students. Such practices are vital in safeguarding against the possibility that students merely become forced to follow rigid orders from

instructors, thus potentially reifying the harmful interpersonal dynamics that already exist within their interactions with correctional staff and prison administration. The expansion of Pell Grant availability for incarcerated students provides a unique opportunity for institutions of higher education to respond to the challenges of mass incarceration. Andragogical teaching methods provide a way to do so that places students at the center of their own learning and development.

Implications for Policy

In combination, these three studies provide key insights for policy makers, educators, and administrators of higher education programs in prison. From a policy perspective, the interview study reported in the first article of this dissertation, offers student-centered justifications for higher education in prison that extend beyond the purely instrumental. The study's participants located meaning in the communal aspects of the program, in the capacity to develop skills and explore personal interests, and in how they benefitted from a deepened capacity for personal self-reflection and inquiry. These types of justifications directly speak to where students themselves find meaning and purpose in their own involvement in higher education in prison. And, yet, such justifications are almost entirely missing from media coverage. Instead, as the second article in this dissertation suggests, the depiction of support for higher education in prison as presented within media coverage predominantly focuses on the instrumental aims of reduced recidivism and taxpayer savings. These types of justifications leave unchallenged the argument of critics—also revealed within the findings of the second article—who frequently suggest that "criminals" are not worthy of access to higher education opportunities.

Such framings of incarcerated populations should be fought against explicitly. Scholarship examining incarceration patterns (as presented in the introduction of this dissertation) reveal that it is certainly not just "bad" people who end up in prison. The data on incarceration strongly suggests at play something much more complicated and disheartening, as both race and economic status deeply impact rates of imprisonment (Looney & Turner, 2018). The all-too-common perception that it is only cruel or immoral people who become incarcerated is both naïve and profoundly incorrect. Research suggests incarceration is much more closely linked to a highly punitive criminal justice system and to deeply ingrained societal inequities resulting from both historical and ongoing injustices (Simon, 2014).

With the announcement of the 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill restoring Pell Grant eligibility in prisons, it is an important moment of progress within the history of higher education in prison. It presents an opportunity for educators, advocates, and policy makers to marshal the types of justifications for programming identified by incarcerated students themselves, breaking away from the rather simplistic purely-instrumental lens. The history of higher education in prison demonstrates that public support for criminal justice reform measures recurrently fluctuate, and so it is vital that justifications for programs and policies be robust and speak to the social and civic principles underlying them.

Instrumental aims, such as reduced recidivism, are relevant and important to consider, perhaps most especially to the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, who are most directly impacted by the potential for reimprisonment. Yet, when such justifications become the primary or sole focus, they can obscure (as is clear from the presented data

relating to media coverage of the debate) more fundamental civic principles related to the recognition of human dignity. Mobilizing civic arguments that resonate and directly respond to criticisms of providing support for such programming can help better ensure the long-term survival of policies and programs. Such a defense of higher education in prison is vital in reframing conceptual understandings on the function of programs as a necessary public good at a time when mass incarceration in the United States has now led to the imprisonment of just under two-million people (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018). This holds true at federal, state, and institution levels, as policies and programs can be made more durable when linked to foundational civic principles instead of the fluctuations of reports on cost-savings.

Why Moral Justifications Matter

It is important to clarify that moral justifications for higher education in prison need not be at odds with more instrumental aims. Reducing recidivism, providing cost-effective programming, and increasing public safety are objectives that matter in their own right, and comprise legitimate reasons for supporting such programs and policies. A moral justification does not obviate such instrumental aims, nor should it aim to. A student-centered, liberal arts approach—like the kind I advocate for throughout this dissertation—is the most likely to lead to these types of desired economic and social outcomes. A moral and/or civic defense of higher education in prison thus goes hand in hand with pursuing instrumental goals. That is not to suggest, however, that defining moral justifications is superfluous, nor is it unimportant. It is vitally important, both in terms of substantiating a clarity of purpose, but also because articulating such aims can have a generative effect, spreading greater consciousness of the intrinsic good such

programs can provide. The moral and the instrumental are linked. Pursuing moral aims is not only intrinsically beneficial, but also provides the clearest path toward achieving desired instrumental outcomes.

Implications for Practice

Maintaining a primary or sole focus on reduced recidivism at a policy and programmatic level not only needlessly endangers prison education initiatives, but also potentially threatens to restrict and diminish the type of educational opportunities incarcerated students receive. Establishing recidivism as a primary objective conveys to students, educators, and the broader public that the purpose of the programming is merely to reform "offenders." Research suggests the potential harm such scenarios might have within the classroom, as the purported (and often lauded) objectives of higher education—such as the formation of independent and critical thinking skills, self-expression, and the capacity for dialogue and debate—can easily be subsumed by the instrumental aims of workforce preparation (Davis & Michaels, 2015; McCorkel & DeFina, 2019). In many ways, as chapter four explores, traditional pedagogies geared toward strictly instrumental goals may inadvertently communicate to students that they pose a danger or threat, are deserving of being removed from broader society, are fit only for low-wage job, or, potentially even worse, that they are unimportant and dispensable.

If educational programming becomes merely an additional form of rule following, then prison education programs risk reaffirming some of the most harmful dynamics already latent within such settings. With higher education in prison opportunities set to dramatically expand under the COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill, it is important that faculty and program administrators be aware of these dynamics, and develop program

curricula and teaching practices that help respond to them. It is particularly crucial that administrators and instructors recognize that programs do not intrinsically comprise a force for good. Prison classrooms are unique learning environments, and so prison education teaching strategies require deliberate forethought and care. Deficit models and top-down pedagogical approaches can inadvertently devalue students' sense of self-worth, potentially harming students while also preventing them from meaningfully engaging with course material and content (Baumgartner & Sandoval, 2018; Warner, 2007). Educators seeking to avoid such outcomes should consider adopting teaching methods that place students at the center of their own learning and development, that make use of student experience, and create opportunities for learners to maintain and advance an important degree of self-direction and agency. They should also be aware of the types of experiences identified by formerly incarcerated students in chapter two as being particularly relevant and meaningful, namely the fostering of community building, the opportunity for personal development, and support for noncoercive, non-prescriptive practices of self-reflection.

As I argue in chapter four, andragogy provides a useful framework in offering a means to these ends. It provides a model that emphasizes process over content, helping to foster student involvement in the delivery, planning, and evaluation of course objectives. By promoting self-direction, andragogical teaching methods support and empower students toward maintaining agency within their own learning, responding to adult learners' prioritization of internal over external motivators. The priority placed on flexibility both accommodates additional teaching paradigms and encourages instructors to meet students where they are within their own learning. All of these characteristics are

of prime importance in carceral settings, and can help provide educational opportunities that are both student-centered and help combat some of the most damaging and dehumanizing aspects of incarceration.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This dissertation comes with limitations that are relevant to consider in their own right, but also help suggest future lines of inquiry for research. In relation to the interviews with formerly incarcerated students within the Boston University Prison Education Program, it is important to ask whether similar findings hold true for students enrolled in different program types that fall under the rather broad umbrella of higher education in prison. Boston University offers a four-year, interdisciplinary liberal arts degree, but that, of course, is just one approach to higher education in prison. Many programs qualifying for Second Chance Pell aid are two-year community college programs that often maintain a predominantly vocational orientation. Research investigating how student experience differs between diverging program types would help provide a more holistic picture of the landscape of higher education in prison, as it is likely that differing program types lead to differences in student experience.

Similarly, the media discourse analysis provided within chapter three is bounded both by the state of New York and the specific time period analyzed. With the recent expansion of Pell Grant availability in prisons, as well as the various impacts that COVID-19 has had both on college-level prison education programs and broader society, it is important to consider how media coverage of the debate over higher education in prison may have shifted. Future research should aim both to examine media discourse in relation to the debate within different parts of the country (especially in states that

diverge from New York politically, as states maintaining different political cultures may discuss higher education in prison in diverging fashions) as well account for the potential impact that COVID-19 may have on the particular ways that the debate is framed.

In relation to teaching practices in carceral settings, it is vital to continue to bear in mind the valid critiques of the field of andragogy, most notably that it does not explicitly take into account students' identities or social contexts. Particularly in prison education classrooms, which are likely to have students from diverse ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds, the need for teaching strategies that can be responsive to such diversity is paramount. Emerging scholarship has attempted to merge the field of andragogy with more critical perspectives (Brown, 2006; De Turk, 2011; Hillock & Profitt, 2007), but as of yet, there does not exist a widely accepted unifying paradigm for a type of "critical andragogy." Higher education programs in prison, however, provide an excellent basis for continuing to pursue connections between critical and andragogical perspectives. Within prison settings, maintaining a degree of self-direction and agency is crucial, but so too is it for students to consider their own identities and social locations within broader societal contexts. Scholarship aiming to bring these two frameworks into greater unison would be particularly useful for the field of higher education in prison.

Finally, at a programmatic level, this dissertation has focused primarily on college-level prison education programs and policies themselves. It is important to recognize, however, that these programs and policies do not exist in a vacuum. Particularly with criminal justice reform measures currently reducing prison populations around the country (Carson & Anderson, 2015; Karstedt et al., 2019), it is important for programs to think more holistically about the opportunities they provide. The school-to-

prison pipeline has been researched extensively in recent years (see, for example, Barnes et al., 2018; Novak, 2019; Rocque & Snellings, 2018). The prison-to-college pipeline, however, is a phenomenon that has not yet received ample scholarship (two notable exceptions include: Anderson et al., 2019; Lampe-Martin & Beasley, 2019). As prison populations decline, the likelihood that incarcerated students will still require credits at the time of their release in order to graduate will continue to increase. This recognition places a priority on better understanding how colleges and universities can help support students post-release in the attempt to continue to pursue their education. Research focused on identifying the specific challenges formerly incarcerated students face, as well as the types of support that they find most beneficial, would be particularly useful in developing a more holistic approach to higher education in prison.

Conclusion

Resulting from a protracted era of "tough on crime" legislation, the passing of the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill banned incarcerated students from receiving Pell Grants and ended more than two decades of federal support for the involvement of higher education in prison. As the primary mechanism by which programs were funded, the impact the legislation had was both immediate and severe (Tewksbury & Taylor, 1996; Ubah, 2004). The majority of higher education programs in prison were either forced to cease running, or else seriously curtail the educational opportunities they could provide. As a result, the number of incarcerated students throughout the country enrolled in higher education programming dropped dramatically.

The announcement of the 2016 Second Chance Pell Pilot Program signaled an era of renewed hope among educators, advocates, and incarcerated students. Once again

providing federal support for college-level education in prison, the program continues to be a massive success. Nearly 22,000 incarcerated students are now enrolled in higher education programming in more than 100 federal and state prisons throughout the country. The federal initiative is currently expanding to include up to 200 different higher education institutions throughout 42 states and the District of Columbia (US Department of Education, 2016, 2021). Second Chance Pell has been so well received that it has led to the full restoration of Pell Grant availability in prisons. Funding for the return of Pell Grants was included as part of the recent 2021 COVID-19 Economic Relief Bill, and is set to take effect as early as 2023 (Burke, 2021; US Department of Education, 2021). The recent legislation punctuates a period of tremendous growth and progress for higher education in prison.

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, it is important to recognize that higher education opportunities in prison do not intrinsically comprise a force for good. And, yet, it is equally important to recognize the great potential for good that such programs have. The provision of higher education in prison can lead to a more humane criminal justice system, helping to break cycles of both literal and figurative imprisonment not only by providing tools for post-release employment, but also by offering opportunities to take part in educational programming that combats—at least in considerable measure—some of the most harmful dynamics of incarceration. Programs have the capacity to offer student-centered curricula that foster a deepened sense of community and civic responsibility, that offer opportunities for personal growth, development, and insight, and encourage noncoercive, non-prescriptive forms of self-reflection and inquiry. These are

the types of opportunities programs should make sure to cultivate, and these are the types of justifications upon which higher education in prison should be defended.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

Participate in a Study: Exploring Formerly Incarcerated Student Perspectives on the Value of Higher Education in Prison

Principal Investigator:
Patrick F. Conway, Boston College

Research Purpose:

- The purpose of this research study is to explore the lived experiences of formerly incarcerated students who have been, or are currently, involved in a college-level education program.

To participate in this research, you must:

- Have graduated from a college-level prison education program, or have taken college-level courses while incarcerated
- Be 18 years old or older

Participation in this Study Involves:

- A one-time, 65-minute interview focused on discussing your experiences within college-level prison education

Contact Information:

- If interested in participating, or to find out more information, please contact Patrick Conway by phone at 617-905-4842, or by email at conwaypd@bc.edu

***Boston University is not affiliated with this study. Your participation in this study will not impact your standing, either positively or negatively, within the Boston University Prison Education Program.**

Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Educational History

Before we get started with questions about the Boston University program itself, I have a few background questions to hopefully help place your experiences within the program in context.

1. Prior to your enrollment in the Boston University Program, could you describe what your educational experiences had been like up until that point?
    a. Can you think of a positive educational experience prior to BU?
        i. What about that made it a positive experience?
        ii. Would you say you had any mentors or people who really influenced your education in a positive way?
    b. Can you think of a negative educational experience prior to BU?
        i. What about that made it a negative experience?
        ii. Would you say you had any people / teachers / administrators who negatively impacted your education?
2. When you entered the Boston University program, how long had it been since you were in school?
    a. Was there anything specific that caused a break in your education?
    b. Why did you decide to apply for the BU program?
    c. What were you hoping to get out of the program?
3. What do you view as future goals for your education? Do you plan to take more classes and continue on with your education, or at the moment are you more focused on other things like work, family, etc.?

The Boston University Program

4. Describe two experiences from your time within the Boston University Prison Education Program that stand out to you. What makes these moments memorable?
5. What does it mean to you to be enrolled (or have been enrolled) in college?
6. What do you view as the benefits of a college experience?
7. What was the biggest challenge of being enrolled in the Boston University program?
8. Has the college experience changed you in any way? If so, how?
9. What for you has been the most valuable aspect of working toward earning (or having earned) a college degree?
10. If you were in the position of defending college in prison programs, what aspects would you find most relevant to highlight?

Appendix C: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Sample Characteristics	*n*	%	Median	Range
Gender				
Men	11	52		
Women	10	47		
Race				
Black	5	24		
Latino/a/x or Hispanic	4	19		
*Multiracial Native American	1	5		
White	11	52		
Education				
Graduated with MA	1	5		
Graduated with BA	13	62		
Not Yet Completed BA	7	33		
Current Age			43	26-72
GPA			3.70	3.00-4.00
Year Started Program			2006	1974-2019
Year of Last Class/Graduation			2011	1986-2020

Note. N=21.

**Self-Identified*

Appendix D: Codebook

Frame	Definition	Example from Data
Instrumental Frame		
Support for Higher Education in Prison		
Benefit at Personal Level	Highlights personal benefits	"…it offers the chance to feel human."
Benefit at Skills Level	Highlights skills-based benefits	"They have an opportunity to gain additional education and skills."
Helps Integrate People Back into Society	Cites how programs help integrate prisoners back into communities	"Students who go to college in prison are more engaged in their communities on return."
Improves Public Safety	Discusses how programs improve public safety	"Helping inmates repair their lives makes all of society safer."
Lowers Recidivism	References reduced recidivism	"Prisoners who earn a college degree are less likely to return."
Saves Taxpayers Money	References taxpayer savings	"Educating prisoners saves taxpayers money by lowering the return rate to prison."
Against Higher Education in Prison		
Burden on Taxpayers	References financial burden on taxpayers	"Taxpayers shouldn't have to foot the bill."
Makes Prison Too Enjoyable	Claims programs confound punitive aims of prison	"Prison is not a country club."
Neutral or No Clear Sentiment		
Questioning Methods / Relevancy of Recidivism Studies	Questions methods and/or relevancy of studies	"A close reading of the RAND review…reveals that few studies pass methodological muster."
Questioning Methods/Findings of Taxpayer Savings Studies	Questions methods and/or findings of studies	"If this is…going to save the state a substantial amount of money, Cuomo should take an advance…and put it toward making college a bit more affordable."

Moral Frame		
Support for Higher Education in Prison		
Calling on Civic Principles	Grounds support for programs in secular / religious / humanistic terms	"It provides opportunity for an underserved population to claim their 'pursuit of happiness.'"
Response to Class / Wealth Dynamics of Incarceration	Couches support in response to class / wealth dynamics of incarceration	"We incarcerate, overwhelmingly, the poor…we owe it to them to provide an education."
Response to Racialized Dynamics of Incarceration	Couches support in response to racial dynamics of incarceration	"College presidents emphasize 'diversity, inclusion and belonging'…Expanding prison education would link those two ventures in a forward-thinking way."
Unspecified Moral Claim	Grounds support upon an unnamed moral basis	"It's just the right thing to do."
Against Higher Education in Prison		
Prisoners as Undeserving of Higher Education	Identifies prisoners as undeserving of educational opportunities	"Why support reactive programs and educate inmates who…may return to a life of crime as smarter criminals?"
Unfair to Law-Abiding Citizens	Claims programs are unfair to "law-abiders"	"This proposal is an insult to law abiding New Yorker's who struggle to pay tuition and take out enormous student loans."
Neutral or No Clear Sentiment Expressed		
Questioning the Extent to which Prisoners are Deserving	Poses the question without providing an answer	"Among those who favor such programs, there is disagreement about which inmates should be eligible. Some say sex offenders… should be banned."

Appendix E: Total Number and Percentage of Articles Invoking Instrumental and Moral Frames by Outlet

	(Albany) *Times Union*	*Buffalo News*	*The New York Post*	*The New York Times*	*The Rochester D & C*	*The Wall Street Journal*	Total Articles with any Framing
Instrumental	**72 (99%)**	**31 (89%)**	**13 (100%)**	**35 (95%)**	**31 (100%)**	**22 (100%)**	**204 (97%)**
Support	61 (84%)	19 (54%)	11 (85%)	35 (95%)	26 (84%)	22 (100%)	174 (82%)
Opp.	30 (41%)	21 (60%)	4 (31%)	8 (22%)	21 (68%)	10 (45%)	94 (45%)
Neutral	6 (8%)	3 (9%)	1 (8%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	3 (14%)	17 (8%)
Moral	**50 (68%)**	**31 (89%)**	**11 (85%)**	**27 (73%)**	**27 (87%)**	**17 (77%)**	**163 (77%)**
Support	19 (26%)	8 (23%)	3 (23%)	21 (57%)	9 (29%)	10 (45%)	70 (33%)
Opp.	41 (56%)	27 (77%)	8 (62%)	16 (43%)	22 (71%)	14 (64%)	128 (61%)
Neutral	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	4 (18%)	13 (6%)
Total Articles	**73**	**35**	**13**	**37**	**31**	**22**	**211**

Appendix F: Total Number and Percentage of Articles Invoking Instrumental and Moral Frames by Year

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Instrumental	**2**	**105**	**20**	**30**	**16**	**14**	**13**	**4**	**204**
	(100%)	**(96%)**	**(91%)**	**(100%)**	**(100%)**	**(100%)**	**(100%)**	**(80%)**	**(97%)**
Support	2	76	20	29	16	14	13	4	174
	(100%)	(70%)	(91%)	(97%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(80%)	(82%)
Opposition	0	70	8	6	7	1	2	0	94
	(0%)	(64%)	(40%)	(20%)	(44%)	(7%)	(15%)	(0%)	(45%)
Moral	**2**	**92**	**20**	**17**	**12**	**9**	**8**	**2**	**162**
	(100%)	**(84%)**	**(91%)**	**(57%)**	**(75%)**	**(64%)**	**(62%)**	**(40%)**	**(77%)**
Support	1	28	12	10	6	8	4	1	70
	(50%)	(26%)	(55%)	(33%)	(38%)	(57%)	(31%)	(20%)	(33%)
Opposition	1	81	16	11	8	4	6	1	128
	(50%)	(74%)	(73%)	(37%)	(50%)	(29%)	(46%)	(20%)	(61%)
Total	**2**	**109**	**22**	**30**	**16**	**14**	**13**	**5**	**211**

REFERENCES

Abes, E.S. & Hernández, E. (2016). Critical and poststructural perspectives on self-authorship. *New Directions for Student Services, 154*(1), 97-108. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20178

Anderson, A.Y., Jones, P.A., & McAllister, C.A. Reentry in the inland empire. In K.M. Middlemass, and C.J. Smiley (Eds.), *Prisoner reentry in the 21st century* (pp. 232-247). New York, NY: Routledge.

Andrews, D.A., & Bonta, J. (2010). Rehabilitating criminal justice policy and practice. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, *16*(1), 39–55. doi:10.1037/a0018362

Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (2006). "Evidence-based adult corrections programs: What works and what does not." Olympia, WA: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Atkin-Plunk, C. A., & Sloas, L. B. (2019). Support for balanced justice and rehabilitation for justice-involved veterans. *Criminal Justice Review*, *44*(2), 165–182. doi:10.1177/0734016818793698

Austin, J. (2017). Limits of prison education. *Criminology & Public Policy, 16*(2), 563-569.

Baranauskas, A.J., & Drakulich, K.M. (2018). Media construction of crime revisited: Media types, consumer contexts, and frames of crime and justice. *Criminology, 56*(4), 679-714.

Barnes, J.C., & Motz, R.T. (2018). Reducing racial inequalities in adulthood arrest by reducing inequalities in school discipline: Evidence from the school-to-prison pipeline. *Developmental Psychology, 54*(12), 2328–2340. https://doi.org/10.1037/

dev0000613

Barthel, M. (2019, July 9). Newspapers fact sheet. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/

Bates, R.A. (2020). Andragogy in practice inventory. In M.S. Knowles, E.F. Holton, R.A. Swanson, and P.A. Robinson (Eds.), *The adult learner* (pp. 318-324). New York, NY: Routledge.

Baumgartner, L.M., & Sandoval, C.L. (2018). 'Being a presence to each other': Adult educators who foster empowerment with incarcerated women. *Adult Education Quarterly, 68*(4), 263-279. doi:10.1177/0741713618774412

Benjamin, L. (2014, February 17). Grisanti bucks Cuomo's prison education plan. *Albany Times Union*. Retrieved from https://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/archives/206378/grisanti-bucks-cuomos-prison-education-plan/

Blakely, C.R., & Bumphus, V.W. (2005). The print media's portrayal of the private prison. *Probation Journal, 52*(1), 69–75.

Bloch, S., & Olivares-Pelayo, E.A. (2021). Carceral geographies from inside prison gates: The micro-politics of everyday racialisation. *Antipode.* Advance online publication. doi:10.1111/anti.12727

Boston University Prison Education Program. (n.d.). *About the prison education program*. https://sites.bu.edu/pep/about/

Bowman, M. (2018). Repeating history: Has the media changed since the Kerner Commission? *Race, Gender & Class, 25*(1), 17-30. https://www.proquest.com/publication/publications_25305?accountid=9673

Brookfield, S.D. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brown, K.M. (2006). Leadership for social justice and equity: Evaluating a transformative framework and andragogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 42*(5), 700-745. doi:10.1177/0013161X06290650

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (1992). *Census of state and federal correctional facilities*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2018). *Prisoners in 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p18.pdf

Burke, L. (2021, January 27). After the Pell ban. *Inside Higher Ed.* https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/01/27/pell-grants-restored-people-prison-eyes-turn-assuring-quality

Burkhardt, B.C. (2014). Private prisons in public discourse: Measuring moral legitimacy. *Sociological Focus, 47*(4), 279–298. doi:10.1080/00380237.2014.940264

Burning Glass Technologies. (2014, September). *Moving the goalposts: How demand for a bachelor's degree is reshaping the workforce*. Boston: Burning Glass Technologies. https://www.burning-glass.com/wp-content/uploads/Moving_the_Goalposts.pdf

Campbell, J. (2014, March 11). O'Brien opposes Cuomo's college-in-prison plan. *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/VoteUp/2014/03/11/obrien-opposes-cuomos-college-in-prison-plan/6294959/

Campbell, J.L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O.K. (2013). Coding in-depth

semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research, 42*(3), 294–320. https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113500475

Carson, E.A., & Anderson, E. (2016). *Prisoners in 2015*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/p15.pdf

Castro, E.L. (2018). Racism, the language of reduced recidivism, and higher education in prison: Toward an anti-racist praxis. *Critical Education, 9*(17), 1–14. doi:10.14288/ce.v9i17.186357

Castro, E. L., & Brawn, M. (2017). Critiquing critical pedagogies inside the prison classroom: A dialogue between student and teacher. *Harvard Educational Review, 87*(1), 99–121. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.41.1.y8l5853483310754

Castro, E.L., & Gould, M.R. (2018). What is higher education in prison? Introduction to radical departures: Ruminations on the purpose of higher education in prison. *Critical Education, 9*(10), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.14288/ce.v9i10.186439

Chestnut, K., & Wachendorfer, A. (2021). *Second Chance Pell: Four years of expanding access to education in prison.* New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice. https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/second-chance-pell-four-years-of-expanding-access-to-education-in-prison.pdf

Conway, P.F. (2020). Getting the debate right: The Second Chance Pell Program, Governor Cuomo's 'Right Priorities' initiative, and the involvement of higher education in prison. *Harvard Educational Review, 90*(4), 598-616. https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-90.4.598

Corrections Compendium. (1997, September). *Survey summary: Education opportunities in correctional settings*. Lincoln, NE: CEGA Publish.

Craft, T., Gonzalez, N., Kelleher, K., Rose, M., & Takor, O. (2019, June 4). *A Second Chance: College-in-Prison Programs in New York State*. Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED605777.pdf

Cullen, F. T., & Gendreau, P. (2001). From nothing works to what works: Changing professional ideology in the 21st century. *Prison Journal*, *81*(3), 313–338. doi:10.1177/0032885501081003002

Davis, L., Bozick, R., Steele, J., Saunders, J., & Miles, J. (2013). *Evaluating the effectiveness of correctional education*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND. doi:10.7249/rr266

Davis, S.W., & Michaels, B. (2015). Ripping off some room for people to "breathe together": Peer-to-peer education in prison. *Social Justice*, *42*(2), 146–158.

DeAngelis, J. (2014, March 5). Save benefits for taxpayers, not criminals. *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*. https://amp.democratandchronicle.com/amp/6032179

DeHart, D., Shapiro, C., & Clone, S. (2018). 'The pill line is longer than the chow line': The impact of incarceration on prisoners and their families. *The Prison Journal, 98*(2), 188-212. doi:10.1177/0032885517753159

De Turk, S. (2011). Critical andragogy and communication activism: Approaches, tensions, and lessons learned from a senior capstone course. *Communication Teacher, 25*(1), 48-60. doi:10.1080/17404622.2010.513995

Devilly, G.J., Sorbello, L., Eccleston, L., & Ward, T. (2005). Prison-based peer-education

schemes. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 10*(2), 219-240. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2003.12.001

Dewey, S., Codallos, K., Barry, R., Drenkhahn, K., Glover, M., Muthig, A., Lockwood Roberts, S., & Abbott, B. (2020). Higher education in prison: A pilot study of approaches and modes of delivery in eight prison administrations. *The Journal of Correctional Education, 71*(1), 57-89. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26915042

Dixon, T.L., & Williams, C.L. (2014). The changing misrepresentation of race and crime on network and cable news. *Journal of Communication, 65*(1), 24–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12133

diZerega, M., & Dholakia, N. (2021, April 28). College in prison adapts as Covid-19 upends education in schools everywhere. *Vera Institute of Justice*. https://www.vera.org/blog/college-in-prison-adapts-as-covid-19-upends-education-in-schools-everywhere

Duff, Jr., M.C. (2019). Perspectives in AE—Adult Black males and andragogy: Is there a goodness of fit? *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 31*(4), 51-58. doi:10.1002/nha3.20264

Duwe, G., & Clark, V.A. (2014). The effects of prison-based educational programming on recidivism and employment. *The Prison Journal, 94*(4), 454-478. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885514548009

Eaton-Robb, P. (2018, August 6). First inmates graduate from Wesleyan program. *Times Union*. https://www.timesunion.com/news/crime/article/First-inmates-graduate-from-Wesleyan-program-13121839.php

Editorial Board. (2016, February 16**)**. A college education for prisoners. *The New York*

Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/16/opinion/a-college-education-for-prisoners.html?mcubz=0

Editorial Board. (2019, August 14). Editorial: Let prisoners be students. *Times Union*. https://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Editorial-Let-prisoners-be-students-14304937.php

Eisinger, R.M., Veenstra, L.R., & Koehn, J.P. (2007). What media bias? Conservative and liberal labeling in major U.S. newspapers. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, *12*(1), 17–36. https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X06297460

Enns, P.K. (2014). The public's increasing punitiveness and its influence on mass incarceration in the United States. *American Journal of Political Science*, *58*, 857–872. doi:/10.1111/ajps.12098

Evans, D. (2018). The elevating connection of higher education in prison: An incarcerated student's perspective. *Critical Education, 9*(11), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.14288/ce.v9i11.186318

Evans, D., Pelletier, E, & Szkola, J. (2018). Education in prison and the self-stigma: Empowerment continuum. *Crime and Delinquency, 64*(2), 255-280. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128717714973

Farrin, J. (2017, August 22). Humanity is the offering in college courses for prisoners. *Times Union*. https://www.timesunion.com/opinion/article/Humanity-is-the-offering-in-college-courses-for-11951339.php

Federal Bureau of Prisons. (2021). Inmate Age [BOP Statistics]. Retrieved from https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_age.jsp

Federal Register. (2015). Notice inviting postsecondary educational institutions to

participate in experiments under the experimental sites initiative; federal student financial assistance programs under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. http://Federalregister.gov/a/2015-18994

Feur, D., & Gerber, B. (1988). Uh oh…Second thoughts about adult learning theory. *Training, 25*(12), 125-149.

Field, K. (2017, December 19). Can a college education solve the nation's prison crisis? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/Can-a-College-Education-Solve/242092

Fields, C., & Newman, S. (2020). Covering the Dawsons: Racial variation in newspaper framing of urban crime. *Sociological Forum, 35*(6), 1040-1058. doi:10.1111/socf.12607

Finger, M., & Asun, J.M. (2001). *Adult education at the crossroads: Learning our way out*. London: Zed Books.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Herder & Herder.

Gaskew, T. (2015). Developing a prison education pedagogy. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 170*(1), 67-78. doi:10.1002/cc.20145

Gould, M.R., & SpearIt. (2014). Twenty years after the education apocalypse: The ongoing fallout from the 1994 omnibus crime bill. *St. Louis University Public Law Review*, *33*, 283–301. https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/plr/vol33/iss2/4

Green, E.L. (2020, December 21). Financial aid is restored for prisoners as part of the stimulus bill. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/21/us/politics/stimulus-law-education.html

Grieco, E. (2020, April 20). U.S. newspapers have shed half of their newsroom

employees since 2008. *Pew Research Center*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/20/u-s-newsroom-employment-has-dropped-by-a-quarter-since-2008/

Gruenewald, J., & Hipple, N.K. (2021). Attributing responsibility when police officers are killed in the line of duty: An ethnographic content analysis of local print news media frames. *Sociological Forum.* https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12682

Hall, R.S., & Killacky, J. (2008). Correctional education from the perspective of the prisoner student. *Journal of Correctional Education, 59*(4), 301-320.

Harnish, J. (2019). Philosophical implications of taxpayer funding for prison education. *Critical Education*, *10*(5), 1–14. doi:10.14288/ce.v10i5.186298

Hemmens, C. (2000). No shades of grey: The legal implications of voluntary racial segregation in prison. *Corrections Management Quarterly, 4*(1), 20-27.

Hillock, S., & Profitt, N.J. (2007). Developing a practice and andragogy of resistance: Structural praxis inside and outside the classroom. *Canadian Social Work Review, 24*(1), 39-54.

Hinton, E. (2018, March 6). Turn prisons into colleges. *The New York Times*. https:// www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/opinion/prisons-colleges-education.html

Heitzeg, N. (2009). Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on Public Policy*, 1-21.

Ho, K.H.M., Chiang, V.C.L., & Leung, D. (2017). Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis: The 'possibility' beyond 'actuality' in thematic analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 73*(7), 1757–1766. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13255

Illich, I. (1970). *Deschooling society*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Ion, G., Stîngu, M, & Marin, E. (2019). How can researchers facilitate the utilization of research by policy-makers and practitioners in education? *Research Papers in Education, 34*(4), 483-498. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1452965

Jacobs, A., & Weissman, M. (2019). *Mapping the landscape of higher education in New York state prisons*. New York, NY: Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Jewkes, Y. (2015). *Media and crime*. London, U.K.: Sage Publications.

Kallman, M.E. (2018). Teaching sociology in a men's prison: How total institutions shape pedagogy and engagement with content. *Teaching Sociology, 46*(4), 295-308. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X18775176

Kallman, M.E. (2020). 'Living more through knowing more': College education in prison classrooms. *Adult Education Quarterly, 70*(4), 321-339. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713619889589

Kang-Brown, J., Montagnet, C., & Heiss, J. (2021). *People in jail and prison in 2020*. New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice. https://www.vera.org/downloads/publications/people-in-jail-and-prison-in-2020.pdf

Karpowitz, D. (2017). *College in prison: Reading in an age of mass incarceration*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Karstedt S., Bergin, T., & Koch, M. (2019). Critical junctures and conditions of change: Exploring the fall of prison populations in US states. *Social & Legal Studies, 28*(1), 58-80. doi:10.1177/0964663917747342

Khosravinik, M. (2010). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers: A critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language and*

Politics, *9*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.9.1.01kho

Kids Before Cons Act, HR3327, 114th Congress. (2015).

Kim, R.H., & Clark, D. (2013). The effect of prison-based college education programs on recidivism: Propensity Score Matching approach. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *41*(3), 196–204. doi:10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2013.03.001

Kim, S.H., Carvalho, J.P., & Davis, A.C. (2010). Talking about poverty: News framing of who is responsible for causing and fixing the problem. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 87*(3), 563-581. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769901008700308

Knowles, M.S. (1989). *The making of an adult educator*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Knowles, M.S., Holton, E.F. & Swanson, R.A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resources development* (5th ed.) Houston, TX: Gulf.

Knowles, M.S., Holton, E.F., Swanson, R.A., & Robinson, P.A. (2020). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (9 ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kolar, K., Ahmad, F., Chan, L., & Erickson, P.G. (2015). Timeline mapping in qualitative interviews: A study of resilience with marginalized groups. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 14*(3), 13-32. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691501400302

Kreighbaum, A. (2019a, June 26). DeVos calls for making "Second Chance Pell" permanent. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2019/06/26/devos-calls-making-second-chance-pell-permanent

Kreighbaum, A. (2019b, July 16). Taking stock of Pell Grants behind bars. *Inside Higher Ed.* https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/07/16/full-repeal-pell-ban-prisons-top-mind-annual-convening-second-chance-pilot

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lampe-Martin, L.R., & Beasley, C.R. (2019). Do the pipes align?: Evaluating the effectiveness of prison-to-college programs. *Harvard Journal of African American Public Policy,* 37-44.

Leibowitz, A.I., Siedner, M.J., Tsai, A.C. (2021). Association between prison crowding and Covid-19 incidence rates in Massachusetts prisons, April 2020-January 2021. *JAMA Intern Med, 181*(10), 1315-1321. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2021.4392

Lewen, J. (2014). Prison higher education and social transformation. *St. Louis University Public Law Review*, *33*(2), 353–362. https://scholarship.law.slu.edu/plr/vol33/iss2/9

Littlefield, J.F., & Wolford, B.I. (1982). A survey of higher education in U.S. correctional institutions. *Journal of Correctional Education, 33*(4), 14-18. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41970677

Long, K. (2015, January 25). Behind bars, college is back in session at some prisons. *Buffalo News*. https://buffalonews.com/news/national/behind-bars-college-is-back-in-session-at-some-prisons/article_acc54454-c04e-55ad-be23-

bd052f1dad19.html

Looney, A., & Turner, N. (2018). *Work and opportunity before and after incarceration*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/research /work-andopportunity-before-and-after-incarceration/

Lundman, R. (2003). The newsworthiness and selection bias in news about murder: Comparative and relative effects of novelty and race and gender typifications on newspaper coverage of homicide. *Sociological Forum, 18*(3), 357-386.

Manhattan District Attorney's Office. (2017, August 7). *Governor Cuomo and Manhattan district attorney Vance announce award recipients of $7.3 million investment in college-level education and reentry services for New York state prisons* [Press release]. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-and-manhattan-districtattorney-vance-announce-award-recipients-73-million#

Martin, G. (2016, February 24). For inmates, a step up with college [Letter to the editor]. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/25/opinion/for-inmates-a-step-up-with-college.html

Martinson, R. M. (1974). What works? Questions and answers about prison reform. *The Public Interest*, *35*, 22–55. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/79c5/5c6c3e66af7 1df264f9c36b1b69367e1655b.pdf?_ga=2.214368592.616017264.15922470281 007854778.1592247028

Martinson, R. (1979). New findings, new views: A note of caution regarding sentencing reform. *Hofstra Law Review*, 7, 243–258. https://scholarlycommons.law.hofstra. edu/hlr/vol7/iss2/1

McCarthy, S. (2016, June 25). How Obama is helping inmates pay for college. *The Christian Science Monitor*. https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2016/0625/How-Obama-is-helping-inmates-pay-for-college

McCarty, H.J. (2006). Educating felons: Reflections on higher education in prison. *Radical History Review*, *96,* 87–94. doi:10.1215/01636545-2006-005

McCorkel, J.A. (1998). Going to the crackhouse: Critical space as a form of resistance in total institutions and everyday life. *Symbolic Interaction, 21*(3), 227-252. doi:10 .1525/si.1998.21.3.227

McCorkel, J., & DeFina, R. (2019). Beyond recidivism: Identifying the liberatory possibilities of prison higher education. *Critical Education*, *10*(7), 1–17. doi:10.14288/ce.v10i7.186316

McGrath, V. (2009). Reviewing the evidence on how adult students learn: An examination of Knowles' model of andragogy. *Adult Learner: The Irish Journal of Adult and Community Education, 99*(1), 99-110.

McKinley, J., & McKinley, J. C. (2016, January 10). Cuomo proposes higher-education initiative in New York prisons. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/ 2016/01/11/nyregion/cuomo-proposes-higher-education-initiative-in-new-york-prisons.html

McLaughlin, M., Pettus-Davis, C., Brown, D., Veeh, C., & Renn, T. (2016). *The economic burden of incarceration in the U.S.* St. Louis, MO: Institute for Advancing Justice Research and Innovation, Washington University in St. Louis.

Meadows, J. (2019). Resisting commodification in honors education. *Journal of National Collegiate Honors Council, 20*(1), 57-62.

Merriam, S.B. (1993). Adult learning: Where have we come from? Where are we headed? In S.B. Merriam (Ed.), *An update on adult learning theory: New directions for adult and continuing education* (pp. 5-14). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Molongoski, B. (2017, August 9). Ritchie launches petition against Cuomo's prison education program. *Watertown Daily Times*. http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/news03/Ritchie-launches-petition-against-cuomos-prison-education-program-20170809

Montenegro, D.A. (2021). Reaching at-risk student populations during a pandemic: The impacts of Covid-19 on prison education. *Frontiers in Communication, 6*(1), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2021.604963

Montes, A.N., Mears, D.P., Gricius, M., & Sanchez, J. (2020). Simplifying reality: The media's portrayal of the private prison debate. *Crime & Delinquency, 66*(9), 1242-1267.

National Center for Education Statistics [NCES]. (2017). *Digest of Education Statistics*. (NCES 303.50). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_303.50.asp

Neuman, W.L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. New York City, NY: Pearson.

Novak A. (2019). The school-to-prison pipeline: An examination of the association between suspension and justice system involvement. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 46*(8), 1165-1180. doi:10.1177/0093854819846917

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E., & Moules, N.J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*(1): 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Page, J. (2011). *The toughest beat: Politics, punishment, and the prison officers' union in California*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pelletier, E., & Evans, D. (2019). Beyond recidivism: Positive outcomes from higher education programs in prisons. *The Journal of Correctional Education, 70*(2), 49-68. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26864182

Pew Research Center. (2019, March 26). For local news, Americans embrace digital but still want strong community connection. https://www.journalism.org/2019/03/26/for-local-news-americans-embrace-digital-but-still-want-strong-community-connection/

Philo, G. (2007). Can discourse analysis successfully explain the content of media and journalism practice? *Journalism Studies, 8*(2), 175-196. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700601148804

Pompoco, A., Wooldredge, J., Lugo, M., Sullivan, & C., Latessa, E. (2017). Reducing inmate misconduct and prison returns with facility education programs. *Criminology & Public Policy, 16*(2), 515-547.

Pratt, D.D. (1988). Andragogy as a relational construct. *Adult Education Quarterly, 38*(3), 160-181.

Pratt, D.D. (1993). Andragogy after twenty-five years. In S.B. Merriam (ed.). *An update on adult learning theory: New directions for adult and continuing education* (pp. 15-25). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Pratt, D.D. (1998). *Five perspectives on teaching in adult and higher education*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Pryor, M., & Thompkins, D. (2013). The disconnect between education and social opportunity for the formerly incarcerated. *American Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*(3), 457-479. doi:10.1007/s12103-012-9184-0

Prison Policy Initiative. (2019). "Mass incarceration: The whole pie 2019." https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2019.html

Ramey, C. (2016, January 10). Cuomo plans college classes for inmates. *The Wall Street Journal*. https://www.wsj.com/articles/cuomo-plans-college-classes-for-inmates-1452475548

Rocque, M, & Snellings, Q. (2018). The new disciplinology: Research, theory, and remaining puzzles on the school-to-prison pipeline. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *59*(1), 3-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.05.002

Rodríguez, D. (2010). The disorientation of the teaching act: Abolition as pedagogical position. *Radical Teacher, 88*(1), 7-19.

Rogers, C.R. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.

Saloner, B., Parish, K., & Ward, J.A. (2020). Covid-19 cases and deaths in federal and state prisons. *JAMA, 324*(6), 602-603. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.12528

Sandlin, J.A. (2005). Andragogy and its discontents: An analysis of andragogy from three critical perspectives. *PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning, 14*, 25–42.

Saxon, S. (2020, April 29). Second Chance Pell Grants Expand to 67 More Prison Sites. *Colorlines*. https://www.colorlines.com/articles/second-chance-pell-grants-expand-67-more-prison-sites#:~:

Schudson, M., & Tifft, S. (2005). American journalism in historical perspective. In G. Overholser & K.H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The institutions of American democracy: The press* (pp. 17-47). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Scott, R. (2012). Distinguishing radical teaching from merely having intense experiences while teaching in prison. *Radical Teacher, 95*(1), 22-32. doi:10.5406/radicalteacher.95.0022

Seiler, C. (2014, February 18). Cuomo's convict higher ed proposal React-o-Mat™. *Albany Times Union*. https://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/archives/206479/cuomos-convict-higher-ed-proposal-react-o-mat/

Simon, J. (2014). Uncommon law: America's excessive criminal law and our common law origins. *Daedalus*, *143*(3), 62–72. doi:10.1162/DAED_a_00288

Skiba, R.J., Arredondo, M.I., & Williams, N.T. (2014). More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 47*(4), 546-564.

SpearIt. (2016). Keeping it real: Why congress must act to restore Pell Grant funding for prisoners. *UMass Law Review*, *11*(26), 26–43.

Spector, J. (2014, February 18). Plan to provide free college to NY prisoners knocked. *The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*. https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2014/02/18/cuomo-college-prison-plan/5582135/

State of New York, Office of the Governor. (2016, January 10). *13th proposal of Governor Cuomo's 2016 agenda: Launch a "Right Priorities" initiative that leads the nation with comprehensive criminal justice and reentry reforms* [Press release]. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/13th-proposal-governor-cuomos-2016-agenda-launch-right-priorities-initiative-leads-nation

St. Clair, R., & Käpplinger, B. (2021). Alley or autobahn? Assessing 50 years of the andragogical project. *Adult Education Quarterly, 71*(3), 272-289. https://doi.org/10.1177/07417136211027879

Surette, R. (2015). *Media, crime, and criminal justice* (5th ed.). Stamford, CT: Cenage Learning.

Sutter, D. (2012). Is the media liberal? An indirect test using news magazine circulation. *Applied Economics, 44*, 3521–3532. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2011.577024

Tewksbury, R. A., & Taylor, J. M. (1996). The consequences of eliminating Pell Grant eligibility for students in post-secondary education programs. *Federal Probation*, *60*, 60–63.

Thomas, R.G. (2012). Expanding the purpose of a prison education classroom. *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education, 1*(3), 173-178.

Torres, V., Jones, S. R., & Renn, K. (2020). Student affairs as a low-consensus field and the evolution of student development theory as foundational knowledge. *Journal of College Student Development, 60*(6), 645-658. https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2019.0060

Ubah, C. B. (2004). Abolition of Pell Grants for higher education of prisoners: Examining antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, *39*(2), 73–85. doi:10.1300/J076v39n02_05

US Department of Education. (1994). *Federal Pell Grant data*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

US Department of Education. (2016, June 24). *12,000 incarcerated students to enroll in postsecondary educational and training programs through Education Department's new Second Chance Pell Pilot Program* [Press release]. https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/12000-incarcerated-students-enroll-postsecondary-educational-and-training-programs-through-education-departments-new-second-chance-pell-pilot-program

US Department of Education. (2020, April 24). *Secretary DeVos expands Second Chance Pell experiment, more than doubling opportunities for incarcerated students to gain job skills and earn postsecondary credentials* [Press release]. https ://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-devos-expands-second-chance-pell-experiment-more-doubling-opportunities-incarcerated-students-gain-job-skills-and-earn-postsecondary-credentials

US Department of Education. (2021, July 30). *U.S. Department of Education announces it will expand the Second Chance Pell experiment for the 2022-2023 award year* [Press release]. https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-it-will-expand-second-chance-pell-experiment-2022-2023-award-year

Utheim, R. (2016). The case for higher education in prison: Working notes on pedagogy, purpose, and preserving democracy. *Social Justice*, *43*(3), 91–106.

Vagle, M.D. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

van Manen, M. (2016). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Vera Institute of Justice. (2019). Incarceration trends in Massachusetts: Incarceration in local jails and state prisons. https://www.vera.org/publications/state-incarceration-trends/massachusetts

Wade, M.M. (2021). What can be taught in college in prison? Reconciling institutional priorities in clashes over incarcerated students' access to instructional materials. *Journal of Prison Education and Reentry, 7*(1), 6-22. https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/jper/vol7/iss1/1/

Walmsley, R. (2018). *World prison population list* (12th ed.). Institute for Criminal Policy Research. https://www.prisonstudies.org/sites/default/files/resources/downloads/wppl_12.pdf

Warner, K. (2007). Against the narrowing of perspectives: How do we see learning, prisons and prisoners? *The Journal of Correctional Education, 58*(2), 170-183.

Weber, P. (2014). Discussions in the comments section: Factors influencing participation and interactivity in online newspapers' reader comments. *New Media & Society*, *16*(6), 941–957. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813495165

Western, B., & Muller, C. (2013). Mass incarceration, macrosociology, and the poor. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 647*(1), 166-189. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716213475421

Wilson, M., Alamuddin, R., & Cooper, D. (2019, May 30). *Unbarring access: A landscape review of postsecondary education in prison and its pedagogical supports*. New York, NY: Ithaka S+R. https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/landscape-review-postsecondary-education-in-prison/

Wright, M.C. (2001). Pell Grants, politics and the penitentiary: Connections between the development of U.S. higher education and prisoner post-secondary programs. *Journal of Correctional Education, 52*(1), 11-16. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23294027

Yettick, H. (2015). One small droplet: News media coverage of peer-reviewed and university-based education research and academic expertise. *Educational Researcher, 44*(3), 173-184. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X15574903

Zook, J. (1994). Ban on Pell Grants to inmates crushes prison-education efforts. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *41*(11), A32–34.

Zurro, D. (2018, January 31). Learning from prison. *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/01/31/guidance-teaching-prisons-opinion